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M1023919

A National Literacy Strategy for All:
How can we ensure that the literacy
classroom meets the needs of every
child?

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EdD)

29th September 2001

‘Aim 1: The school curriculum should aim to provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve.

Aim 2: The school curriculum should aim to promote pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.’

(QCA, 1999, p.11)

This thesis is dedicated to my husband David for his love and support throughout my studies.

Abstract

This thesis sets out to investigate the issues surrounding the National Literacy Strategy within the inclusive classroom. In order to set the study within a context it was necessary to examine the development of the English National Curriculum that led to the strategy's introduction into Primary Schools in England during 1998. In my role of Literacy Consultant I supported schools on the introduction of the NLS. One of these schools, which I shall call Northtown School, had been placed in 'Special Measures' following an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectors and this added another dimension to the research which surrounded a participant action research study within one classroom of the school. So called 'failing' schools only exist when they are identified by such inspections and I put forward a case against the criteria by which they are assessed.

The issues surrounding an inclusive classroom are central to my theme and I put forward a criticism of the National Literacy Strategy in its failure to address the speaking and listening skills with the authority necessary to ensure the needs of all children can be met. A Framework for Teaching sets out how teachers are to implement the National Literacy Strategy. The Framework is in essence hierarchical in nature and criterion reference, so seems to be at odds with the notion of a child-centred curriculum.

The analysis of the substantial data gathered at each cycle is crucial. The thesis attempts to consider any analysis from multiple perspectives, coming to a conclusion that although we cannot be certain that we have considered every aspect, for we may not have the necessary skills or knowledge, children's difficulties occur at the interface between them and the classroom curriculum. Solutions are not found 'within' the children but at the child/curriculum interface.

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Chapter 1 Rationale and Significance

How I Came to the Research

At the time of the study I was working on a one-year secondment as a Literacy Consultant within the Education Effectiveness Team of a Local Educational Authority but the research itself dates back much further. When I qualified as a teacher my main subject was Mathematical Education, however during studying for a post-graduate diploma in 1989 I became interested in the teaching and learning of pupils who were experiencing difficulties in making progress. In 1996 I obtained a post working for the Local Education Authority in a peripatetic role as a learning support teacher. My initial research questions were to focus upon this role, looking at support for those children who were experiencing difficulty in acquiring literacy in particular, but the arrival of the National Literacy Strategy (the NLS, DfEE, 1998) brought about a new focus. My initial research was leading me towards the notion of an 'inclusive classroom', one that provides for a diverse range of needs, rather than as Golby and Gulliver (1979) put it an 'ambulance service' that supports the identification of children with 'learning difficulties' rather than rectifying the situation. My role as a Literacy Consultant provided me with the opportunity to focus my study on the opportunities for inclusivity provided by the rationale of the daily Literacy Hour. As part of the Education Effectiveness Team I was also required to give additional input to schools that were 'causing concern'. One such school, that I will call Northtown School, was placed in Special Measures following an OFSTED inspection and it was there that my research study took place.

Rationale

When the Labour Government came into power in the mid nineties they put education at the forefront of their agenda, stating their priorities as 'Education, Education, Education' (Economist, 1999). The Government quickly produced a White Paper 'Excellence in Schools' (DfEE, 1997c) and a consultative Green Paper 'Excellence for all Children' (DfEE, 1997d) both of which were designed to bring about some fundamental changes to education in this country. Following the Code of Practice *Relations between schools and LEAs* (DfEE, 1999) the role of the Local Education Authority underwent radical transformation with schools becoming more autonomous with regards to their own performance. Monitoring visits from LEA personnel were reduced in order to give support in proportion to need, leaving schools that were viewed by the LEA as 'successful' with little access to the support services. This change, alongside the deployment of centrally held resources to schools, has brought about the need for LEAs to reassess their support services.

In the LEA within which my study is set there had been a reduction in the amount of support time devoted to assessing and meeting the needs of individual children and the emphasis put on school initiatives. The Green Paper applauded this move away from what it saw as expensive remediation towards more preventative work. Although LEAs still have a statutory duty to supply certain services to support pupils with identified Special Educational Needs, many of the other elements of its support work now have to be bought in by the schools. The market place culture means that in order to maintain their current staffing levels the support services have to listen to what schools say they need and produce schools are prepared to pay for. As a Literacy Consultant working on the Government's remit of training and supporting schools to implement the National Literacy Strategy my role was somewhat different as schools had an entitlement to my services at no cost.

The support of a literacy consultant was firstly as a basic entitlement given to all schools to cover training issues and secondly in proportion to need as based upon the end of Key Stage Two Standard Attainment Tests results in English. The majority of my time spent in the focus school however came about as support given by the LEA to a school in 'Special Measures'. How this support came about, and what that meant both to the school and to myself as their literacy consultant, are subjects I discuss in Chapter 5.

Action research attempts to bring about change and part of that change is self-development. With the changing role of the LEA brought about over the last two years by the implementation of fair funding schools are increasingly taking on a self-evaluation role. The introduction of 'light touch' inspections from January 2000 (OFSTED, 1999b) moves the onus onto schools to perform their own data gathering and evaluation. LEAs will no longer support the majority of schools with self-evaluation but will monitor that it is happening and challenge schools to improve. Alongside this school self-evaluation is the government agenda for individual evaluation. During March 2000 teachers were invited to apply to go through the 'threshold' with success bringing an increase in their salaries of £2000 per annum (DfEE, 2000a). As evidence of their competency teachers must provide data, a large part of which involves self-evaluation in terms of the effectiveness of their own teaching. Any extensive examination of ones own teaching and analysis of children's learning, when undertaken systematically and with some rigour, could arguably come under the remit of practitioner research.

Literacy has long held a central place in society's view of education and the Labour Government in power at this time have stated their commitment to maintaining its thrust for education. I shall discuss the debate about the implementation of the National Curriculum and the government's influence upon education today in the following chapters.

'Excellence in Schools' made clear the importance the Government put upon the raising of standards in English although universally there is little agreement as to whether standards have actually fallen. The introduction of a Literacy Hour following a National Framework for Teaching document (DfEE, 1998) is one of the strategies designed to bring this 'raising of standards' about.

This introduction of the NLS is not without controversy and the lack of consideration of the needs of those children experiencing difficulties makes for major debate. Whilst difficulty in acquiring literacy may be a major hurdle to full participation during literacy hour it is not the only barrier to learning. Children bring with them to school a whole range of experiences, any mismatch between their needs and what the school provides can lead to youngsters who are disaffected and unwilling to participate, or a 'won't learn, can't learn' scenario when children perceive themselves as unable to read or write and therefore are increasingly unwilling to try. There are many factors that play a part in a child's school experience and in Chapter 4 I discuss some of the possible barriers to learning that may exist.

The Study

My study takes place in a mixed ability classroom that contains a group of pupils who had become disaffected about school and who were struggling to acquire literacy. The pupils were viewed by the teachers as becoming increasingly difficult to have in school because their behaviour was a disruption to the teaching of others in the class. Because the school was in 'special measures' (see Chapter 5) the classrooms were frequently visited by inspectors, LEA personnel and governors and this may have increased the pressure upon teachers to 'manage' their class in a particular way. A class where pupils were not responding to requests and who were behaving aggressively towards others was possibly not the learning environment that teachers wanted to be open to view. I will discuss the debate surrounding what makes for an 'inclusive classroom' in Chapter 4 but I entered the study holding the view that pupils within the class were not receiving an inclusive education in terms of access to the curriculum or receiving education alongside their peers. The above factors are not mutually exclusive nor without causal elements but rather than trying to identify and unravel these, my study tries to address the entirety of the pupils' needs within the politics of the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy.

My work in Northtown School was under the remit of an LEA support service about which, because of their diverse nature across the country, it is difficult to generalise. Some support services are bases from which teachers go out to spend time working in a small number of schools giving regular support to the same group of children each week, other support services work on whole school issues or the assessment of children. The position of Literacy Consultant came about in order to support the implementation of the NLS, it is unique in that rather than supporting a school or a child my role was to support the implementation of a strategy. Through being able to concentrate my study in one class in one school I hoped to be in a position to give a particular insight into the teaching and learning of literacy using the framework document within an inclusive class environment.

This thesis presents something about the origins of the National Literacy Strategy and the discussions surrounding its implementation (see Chapter 3), however, as a piece of action research, the study has by design a particular direction in which my implementations will take it. The direction of the study is towards the full implementation of the literacy hour within the mixed ability classroom. The focus of my work acknowledges this and seeks to investigate how the hour can be used to create an inclusive literacy classroom. The study takes place in a Local Education Authority that has a policy of mainstream education for all primary pupils wherever possible. It is within this context that the school operates and my study attempts to increase the inclusive education of a small group of pupils within one of these classes with regard to the shared whole class work elements of the NLS. Participant Action Research, especially that carried out by someone with an additional monitoring role, creates some difficulties. I have attempted to validate my observations and findings through the triangulation of evidence wherever possible. The transparency of the methods and instruments used in the study will further aid the claims I make towards the validity of my findings and their possible transference.

Significance of the Research

Notable research surrounding the areas of my study, the notion of an inclusive classroom and the development of literacy skill, has taken place. Many studies in America have concerned the management of the behaviour of a class or of particular pupils. Hardman and Smith (1999) have reported on a number of studies looking at the use of positive interventions to manage classroom behaviour, in particular they reported upon studies that use rule development as a systematic positive instruction tool (e.g. Gunter et al., 1994; Jack et al., 1996; Englert 1984). These studies use what could be termed a behaviourist approach however and there is some danger that the pupils are seen as the ones with the ‘problem’ and the solution is to try to change them to make them ‘fit into’ the school.

Having adopted the notion that difficulties only arise at the interface, and accepting that a study such as this does not have the wherewithal to bring about curriculum change, one must therefore study the inclusive classroom pedagogy. My curriculum was fixed, the direction of change was largely set in that it was to bring this about, what was at issue was how this could be done in such a way as to meet the needs of all pupils.

Research surrounding individual case studies that analyse the data surrounding particular student, whilst providing enlightenment surrounding difficulties that are arising acquiring literacy, do I believe carry some risk that any framework for learning that arises from such a study is not necessarily transferable into the inclusive mainstream classroom. What is effective in terms of bringing about increased literacy skills for one child may not be possible with a class situation therefore my research will take place within the mainstream class in order that claims of transference may be valid. A central issue as my research study developed was the conflict between meeting the needs of individual pupils, that is a child centred approach, and the whole class approach that lies at the heart of the National Literacy Strategy.

I believe that my research, placed as it is within the National Literacy Strategy, will contribute to the debate surrounding inclusive education. Reports about the early years of the strategy suggest that it was seen by some as neither promoting inclusive education nor supporting those children who were having difficulties.

‘...it is not a strategy for helping children who are struggling with reading; it is for improving the overall level of literacy in primary schools.’ (Beckett, 2000 p.30)

Classrooms that have encompassed a ‘child-centred’ approach where pupils may be working on individually differentiated tasks are possibly not conducive to the NLS emphasis upon whole class ‘shared’ work. Some teachers see the strategy’s direction to teach to the ‘above average’ pupil level in the class leaving little option but to exclude the less able. Books in reading schemes that schools use are progressive, designed to provide just enough challenge with each rising level but not so much as would discourage, yet here is a framework that suggests that the whole class should study the same enlarged text. Where is the emphasis that had previously surrounded making sure the task given matched the child’s skills and knowledge if everybody is to do the same?

‘The Key Stage 2 objectives are built on an expectation that pupils will have attained a basic level of reading fluency.’ (DfEE, 1998, p7)

Surely the whole notion of a literacy strategy was brought about because the government felt that pupils at Key Stage 2 did not have the levels of reading fluency that was expected of them? Are the notions of inclusive education and the National Literacy Strategy compatible? In this thesis I am setting out to see if the daily literacy hour can be used as a tool and an impetus towards inclusion.

The absence of speaking and listening objectives within the National Literacy Framework for Teaching is an issue that I discuss in later chapters. An issue for me was how language as a tool for social construction, which I feel must be at the centre of an inclusive classroom, could be accommodated within the Literacy Hour.

I anticipate that through my participant action research I will be in a position to present a framework through which the NLS can indeed support my notion of an inclusive classroom, as well as highlight some of the difficulties that have arisen. Alongside providing the data for analysis my interventions will hopefully have made a significance difference to the teaching and learning that took place within one classroom as well as contributing to my own professional development and opening up debate within the LEA about the inclusive literacy classroom.

Research Questions

Question the research is designed to address:

How can we ensure that the literacy classroom, operated within the framework of the National Literacy Strategy, meets the needs of every child?

A number of other questions relate to the context of the research and the background of the study.

The national, LEA and personal perspective.

- What is the national perspective of education today?
- What is the context of my LEA within this national perspective?
- What was my role within the LEA as a literacy consultant?
- What were my perceptions of my role?
- Why was the particular school chosen as the focus for the study?

Those surround OFSTED inspections

- How did the chosen school come to be identified as a 'failing' one?
- What are the processes of any inspection identification?
- What are the main criticisms of the OFSTED identification process?
- What effect did this identification have upon the school?

Those relating to the development of literacy and its teaching in schools.

- How did the English National Curriculum develop?
- How was the National Literacy Strategy developed and implemented?
- What evaluations are being made of the National Literacy Strategy?
- What are the main criticisms of the National Literacy Strategy?

Those relating to the inclusive classroom.

- What do I mean by inclusive education?
- What is the background to inclusive education?
- Why should inclusivity be an aim for educators?
- What barriers to literacy acquisition are there?
- How are children identified as having difficulties?

Other questions related to my initial needs analysis

- How was the class in question selected?
- How did the particular pupils become the foci of the study?
- What analysis did I make of the needs of the pupils?

Other questions within the Action Research Cycle.

- What analysis of the pupils' needs did I make?
- What intervention did I design to meet these needs?
- In what ways was the National Literacy Strategy used to include the pupils in the literacy teaching?
- How was any intervention implemented?
- How did I evaluate the interventions?

Following the study I will discuss

- How effectively did I fulfil my objectives in my role of Literacy Consultant?
- What changes I could have made to the research instruments or methodology

Chapter 2 Context of the Research

The National Background

The present Labour Government has stated that it has pledged its support for education, it says, by providing additional funds, ensuring that bad teachers are weeded out, supporting the provision of computers and internet access for all schools and raising standards. In May 1996 the then Shadow Secretary of State for Education David Blunkett established a Literacy Task Force (Literacy Task Force, 1997) in order to develop a strategy for raising standards of literacy in primary school over a five to ten year period. The National Literacy Project, under John Stannard (1997), was piloted in 13 Local Education Authorities. Although the project was planned to run for five years the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) was introduced in certain schools in 1997 and the Framework for Teaching that sets out the strategy was to begin to be put in place in all primary schools from September 1998. David Blunkett, when he became Secretary of State for Education, restated his commitment to education by stating that if the targets they had set for the percentage of children achieving acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy are not met by the year 2002 he will resign from office. The National Literacy Strategy and its daily Literacy Hour, followed in 1999 by the National Numeracy Strategy were designed to ensure that Government aspirations became realities. (In the Labour Government's cabinet reshuffle in 2001 David Blunkett became Home Secretary and therefore any resignation pledge is presumably no longer valid).

The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy was by no means smooth, critics suggested that it was too prescriptive or that it did not meet the diverse needs of all primary pupils. Beard (1999) was asked to pull together some of the recent research that was said to have led to the NLS but this was criticised as an attempt at justification of an already imposed strategy.

Since the introduction of the NLS we have had a series of additional 'add-ons', some of which are designed to take place within the Literacy Hour and some outside. Additional literacy strategies are an attempt to pick up on those pupils who are not making the progress deemed necessary in order for schools to meet their literacy targets.

The targets that the government have set are however open to criticism. If agreement existed that standards of reading and writing need to be raised, and both Cox (1995) and Brooks (1997) found there was no substantial evidence that they have fallen in post war years, the assessment of these skills is a problematic area. How is it possible to assess the work of a child today against that produced 10 or 20 years ago when the skills, knowledge and experiences of today's youngsters are entirely different? How can one measure the ability to negotiate a CD Rom or search the World Wide Web for information against correct spelling or handwriting? As the world progresses and changes the skills we value must change also, inevitably some will become less important. Progression in literacy is by no means linear and any piece of writing contains elements from different 'levels' in the English programmes of study, the assessment documentation itself talks in terms of a 'best fit' (QCA, 1999).

The debate surrounding standards of literacy in this country will no doubt continue, just as it has throughout most of the last century since the Newbolt Report in 1921 (Ministry of Ed., 1921). Alongside any literacy debate teachers are faced with major changes that impact upon the way they teach. Teachers are under increasing pressure and additional stress, as they struggle to cope with more initiatives and their implementation. September 2000 brought about a new curriculum and the National Grid for Learning and its accompanying training in the use of computers in the classroom has already had major impact in over half of the primary schools within my authority. The Code of Practice (DfEE, 1999) is bringing about changes at the interface between schools and the LEA.

The Green Paper on pay reforms (DfEE, 2000) has placed teacher appraisal on the agenda again; this time around called Performance Management. A new, higher, pay scale is to be introduced and teachers who wish to apply to move onto this new scale need to complete a lengthy form in order to go through the 'Threshold'. In subsequent years the form will have to be accompanied by a portfolio of evidence of which pupil progress plays a large part. OFSTED inspections (OFSTED, 1999b) continue to loom with an agenda that has moved a little away from classroom observations towards schools' own evidence trails. In amongst these reforms schools still await the revised Code of Practice on Special Educational Needs. These changes seem to point towards an emphasis on achievements measured only in terms of examination or test success. There appears to be little thought either about the children whose achievements need to be recognised under different criteria or to the teaching profession who are being asked to 'produce the rise in standards' amidst constant changes of policy and practice.

The Political Importance of a Literate Society

Studies conflict as to whether the standard of literacy in this country has fallen. Cox (1995) suggests that what has changed is the way in which researchers are measuring attainment and the needs of the society in which those studies take place. Dramatic changes have certainly occurred surrounding the needs of business and industry. Legibility of handwriting was an important issue over the last century but society, at least adults in employment, are becoming increasingly reliant upon forms of word processing, it may be that in the future even this will be replaced by voice-activated software. The emerging technology of the 21st century has had a dramatic impact upon the job market and will continue to do so. Successive governments have been pushed by business and commerce to produce the type of workforce that they require.

Roberts (1995) considers that the approaches that set out to quantify levels of literacy are actually measuring people in such a way as to create hierarchies, rather than discovering what literacy is, he considers this an attempt to shape what is considered literate/illiterate for political reasons. Like Freire (1987) Roberts suggests that views of literacy as something 'good' come from an underlying, and wrong, assumption that there is a link between literacy levels and economic growth. Roberts goes on to suggest that a response to the failure of the above approaches to give answers leads to a view that literacy cannot be precisely or scientifically measured. Problems are created when considerable sums of money are spent on literacy campaigns that cannot subsequently be quantified or compared.

A Market Orientated Approach to Education

In all the Government changes outlined above there is a view of education as a commodity with the schools as providers of that commodity, an end product of a literate and numerate workforce, for society to utilise. This idea of schools as the providers of education then brings about competition between schools, those viewed as 'successful' i.e. producing good examination results, then become oversubscribed. The gap between the 'successful' and the 'failing' becomes wider as parental choice creates a migration away from the less successful schools. Situations then exist such as in Kingston where local children are not allocated a place at the neighbourhood school because of the large number of pupils coming in from outside the area.

Whereas it may be acceptable for businesses to be competitive with others in the same domain, after all they are chasing the same buyers and therefore must balance their costs in order to price their goods or services competitively, this way of working is totally inappropriate for schools. Children do not arrive on a conveyor belt with similar experiences and attributes neatly packaged in appropriate class sizes, although the NLS seems to assume that they do and most importantly they cannot be 'turned into' the same homogenous product by being put through the same process.

Our children are all unique individuals and not a commodity that can be 'manufactured' into the workforce of the future. Society must not 'reject' certain pupils because to educate them would not be 'cost effective'.

'Failing' Schools

My research study takes place in a school that was deemed by OFSTED to have 'failed' its inspection. I will discuss how this came about and the implications of it in greater detail in a later chapter, but how does this notion of 'failing' schools fit it with the Governments approach to education? The Government has pledged to 'turn around' all failing schools or close them. The necessity for places often means that the closed schools are then re-opened, with a new name, new head teacher and often new staff in order to give them a 'fresh start'. Where they are not closed the idea of introducing 'super heads' to turn the schools around is gaining favour, this however appears to suggest that it really is the school that is 'letting' the children down and that outside factors exert no influence on the situation. This fits in with Beckett's view that the overall assumption that the government made when deciding to introduce a national literacy strategy was that the first problem to be tackled was bad teaching (Beckett, 2000). A number of these 'super heads' leave after a short while, apparently finding that the task is impossible. There are also difficulties in recruiting for 'fresh start' schools, as job security is an issue if the school cannot be turned around and will therefore close (Richmond, 2000).

A recently introduced initiative whereby a 'failing' school is paired with a 'successful' one is also problematic. Alongside the difficulties that arise because such an initiative fails to take into account outside factors there is also a danger of the migration of pupils from one school to the other. As Willmott (1999) noted the overall flaw in the above is the theory that the examination of 'successful' schools can lead to practical solutions for other schools. The correlation of observed and measured factors does not necessarily lead to evidence of their causality.

‘Certain factors may be associated with good performance,
but this is not to say that they cause them.’

(Davies, 1997, p33)

In all discussions about failing schools one must consider the effects that such identification has upon the teachers. There is already pressure on teachers to produce good examination results and, although the Government's initiative 'Performance Related Pay' has met with union opposition, Performance Management (DfEE, 1999) came into effect in 2000 and contains a similar emphasis on measuring teacher performance by pupil achievement. Such 'payment by results' can devalue the work carried out with Special Educational Needs pupils where progress (or in Government terms 'value added') can be more difficult to define and measure. One could also question whether the best teachers would want to work in the schools where pupil achievements are low, schools that arguably are in most need of effective teachers.

Context of the LEA

The LEA in which my study is set is a small but diverse one. Surrounding the major town there exists an area that has all the hall marks one associates with social deprivation, high levels of unemployment, poor housing, very few recreation facilities. Within the LEA the majority of children with statements of Special Educational Needs are educated within mainstream schools. Where children have severe, complex or multiple difficulties and their needs cannot be met in mainstream there are places available at two special primary schools - during 1998/99 less than 6% of the LEA's statemented pupils were educated in this sector. At the time of the study an active Assessment and Learning Support Service was in operation within the LEA. Every school within the authority had a support teacher from the service assigned to them and they were able, to a certain extent, to negotiate how the delegated time was to be used in order to help children on their SEN register. (Although it is not compulsory for schools to have such a register it was expected that they did by the LEA.)

The LEA's commitment to inclusion also extends to those youngsters exhibiting behaviour difficulties. Additional staff were employed to the Behaviour Support Team with the specific aim of responding to pupil needs before exclusion takes place. This team work alongside teachers in the school, an Educational Welfare Office often works with the family of the youngster and where it is thought to be helpful a support assistant will work alongside the child on a daily basis in the classroom. This intervention has proved successful when the criteria is the measurement of the LEA against their statistical neighbours on the numbers of exclusions, over the two terms of my study only one primary aged child was permanently excluded, but has given rise to criticism that the outcomes do not always effectively meet the needs of the child. Many factors play a part when a child behaves in such a way as to be in danger of exclusion from school.

The child's prior experiences, the home environment, within-child difficulties, their relationships with others including their peers and adults they come into contact with, the learning environment and curriculum and the perceptions of the adults within it may all be factors in the child's exclusion yet the expectation of the LEA is that, with the outlined support, the child should remain in their present school. This decision can cause conflict between the LEA and some schools when the Governing Body feels that the school has done all it can to retain the pupil within it and the LEA refuses to uphold an exclusion. For some pupils exclusion from one school has meant that they are given a place at another, nothing else but their placement has changed and further difficulties or even another exclusion becomes inevitable.

Literacy Consultancy

How I Came to the Role

During the Summer Term of 1998 the LEA were putting together a literacy team to support the implementation of the Government's National Literacy Strategy (NLS, DfEE, 1998). The Government funding, allocated according to the size of the LEA, was for one Literacy Consultant. The LEA supplemented this through a grant from the Training and Enterprise Council and through secondment from the existing support services, thus the team became four, one Government funded, one TEC funded, one seconded from the Language Support Service (later to become part of the Ethnic Minorities Attainment Grant) and myself from the Learning Support Service. Our remit was to work in a number of, what the NLS termed, intensive support schools to support them in implementing the NLS and raise standards of attainment. Prior to our appointments the LEA selected these schools by looking at the previous year's end of Key Stage Two standard attainment test results for English and ranking the schools according to the percentage of pupils attaining a level 4 or above. Of the bottom twenty performing schools ten had a large proportion of pupils with English as an additional language and the secondee from the Language Support Service worked in those schools, the remaining ten schools were allocated to me. The other two consultants worked in the next 30 schools on the ranked list and thus 50% of our primary schools were to receive support.

My Role Within Northtown School as a Literacy Consultant

As part of my role as a literacy consultant within the authority I visited the ten schools and discussed their planned implementation of the NLS with the head teacher and, usually, the literacy co-ordinator. Each school was required by the LEA to carry out an audit of literacy to help them to draw up an action plan for literacy and I negotiated my responsibilities within this plan in each school. Within Northtown School one of the elements of my negotiated work was the participant action research study within one classroom.

My time in the school was planned to help the class teachers to implement the strategy by passing on ideas, strategies and resources that I or my colleagues had tried and found to work well. I was able to spend a considerable amount of additional time in Northtown School as part of the extra support that the LEA was providing to the school following the concerns raised by the OFSTED inspection, this I have detailed in Chapter 5.

My Perceptions of the Role Within the LEA

There was an expectation at a national level that the role of the literacy consultant was to deliver the training as set out and to monitor the schools' implementation of the NLS but fortunately, because of extra funding that enabled additional consultants to be employed, the LEA was able to take a broader view of the way we might work. We were able to spend much more time in schools than most consultants and this enabled me to work alongside teachers, pooling ideas and jointly planning ways to implement the NLS, in this way elements of the national training materials were expanded with practical examples of how they might be implemented in the classroom and schools cluster meetings developed where the consultants became the facilitators in discussions amongst practitioners about difficulties that were arising.

As part of my role I had to 'negotiate a challenging target' for each of the ten schools within my cohort as to the percentage of pupils who would gain a Level 4 or above in their end of Key Stage Two SATs for each year from 1999 to 2002. Difficulties negotiating targets arose because of the insistence that the 'targets' that schools set culminated in the LEA meeting their target which had been set at national level.

Difficulties With the Identification of Schools for Intensive Support

The allocation of Literacy Consultant time to schools was a subject for debate throughout the year. The members of the Literacy Team were concerned about the way in which the schools had been identified, feeling that by looking at the results from just one year the ranking did not necessarily correspond to probable attainment for the following year. For example one school allocated to myself has a hearing impaired unit and during 1997 four hearing impaired pupils took the Key Stage Two SATs. Specialists in the HI unit told me that, because of the criteria used in the SATs and the way they taught language, they did not think that it was possible for a sign language user to attain a Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2. Within a cohort of only 22 the achievements of four pupils significantly lowered the overall percentage of level 4 and above and brought the school into the intensive support catchment.

Where schools had small cohort taking the SATs, over a fifth of the schools had less than twenty pupils in year 6 and nearly half less than 30 pupils, pupils absences and the number of pupils with special educational needs within the year group produced anomalies. One of my schools obtained 26% of level 4+ in 1997 whereas previous results had always been much higher, in 1998 they obtained 76% at 4+ a full 13% higher than the LEA average and were therefore astonished to find themselves in a cohort of ten schools labeled intensive support. It also worked the other way around and a number of schools not in the intensive support cohort felt that they had particular difficulties, such as inexperienced teachers or a class causing concern, and requested support that we were unable to give. Rather than look at the results from one year the literacy team would have liked to consider all the data we had available, including Key Stage One SATs, this was particularly true in the case of separate Infant and Junior schools that were in my cohort. Looking at possible trends over time for each school may have given us a different picture.

Alongside the debate about the data selected for choosing the intensive support schools is the issue of what the data actually measures and how this matches or not the work of the literacy consultants. If one accepts that the SATs results are some measurement of pupil attainment one is still nevertheless left with the fact that the role of a literacy consultant was to oversee the implementation of the NLS rather than any direct involvement in pupil learning. The nationally defined role of the consultants involved providing in-service training, using the nationally produced material, aimed at helping teachers and schools to plan for and implement the daily Literacy Hour. An important issue raised at a head teachers' meeting was that the support the literacy team was giving was not direct to pupils but to staff and the selection system was therefore accused of assuming that the staff most in need of help were all working in the 'bottom of the league table' schools.

Chapter 3

The Development of the National Literacy Strategy

This thesis surrounds the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy which describes literacy as uniting,

‘...the important skills of reading and writing. It also involves speaking and listening which, although they are not separately identified in the Framework, are an essential part of it. Good oral work enhances pupils’ understanding of language in both oral and written forms and of the way language can be used to communicate.’

(DfEE, 1998 p. 8)

The English National Curriculum

The Development of the English National Curriculum

In the years since the Newbolt Report (Ministry of Ed., 1921), produced in 1921 following concerns about the standards of literacy amongst the conscript army in World War One, the government has commissioned a succession of reports. The Newbolt Report did not focus upon basic literacy, as was studied previously, but on functional competence as was expected by employers (Frater, 1995). The Bullock Report (DES, 1975) looked more closely at the teaching of English but many of its recommendations were not acted upon. The Kingman Report (DfES, 1988) added to the debate and the Cox Report (DfES, 1989) led to the Subject Order for English that came into force with effect from 1st August 1989 (Raban-Bisby, 1995). Shortly afterwards the National Curriculum Council and School Examinations and Assessment Council began work on *The Case for Revising the Order* (NCC, 1992) which came into force in 1993.

In 1994 a new 'slim line' version of the National Curriculum was drafted under the direction of Dearing (SCAA, 1994). The National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching (DfEE, 1998) was produced that pertained to,

‘Cover the statutory requirements for reading and writing in the National Curriculum for English and contributes substantially to the development of Speaking and Listening.’ (DfEE, 1998 p.3.)

A revised ‘Curriculum 2000’ (QCA, 1999) came into effect from September 2000, it brought with it substantial changes of emphasis but English remains unrevised. The curriculum for English, as prescribed by the government, has thus undergone fundamental change over the last twelve years.

Changes to the English National Curriculum

Cox accepts that the committee he chaired did not produce a perfect English curriculum but criticises the 1994 version under various areas (Cox, 1995).

- *Standard English*

Cox maintains that there is too great an emphasis placed upon speaking and writing Standard English in the 1994 version. He suggests that in a changing society there can never be consensus on what constitutes Standard English. He also writes of his worries about its early introduction, maintaining that it is not appropriate to demand spoken Standard English much before Key Stage 3 in many schools. The contrast between language used at home and that used in school means that some children could be disadvantaged. Interestingly Tizzard and Hughes (1985) found that the language children were using at home was more sophisticated than that they used in school, suggesting that the unfamiliar school context including the content of teacher talk was inhibiting their understanding.

Raban-Bisby (1995) suggests that the emphasis on the secretarial aspects of writing only serves to stifle creativeness from pupils, seeing this as being brought about by the drive towards external forms of assessment. He suggests that discussions built upon the background of a diverse classroom of pupils are much harder to assess than, for example, reciting the alphabet or placing full stops in the correct place. This is still true under our present forms of assessment where in end of Key Stage tests creativity in writing is only a part of the overall assessment and the 'best fit' model means that punctuation, spelling, grammar and handwriting often lowers the attainment level awarded to an imaginative piece of work.

- *Phonics*

Cox (1995) criticises the emphasis on phonics, suggesting that in light of research both advocating for and against such an emphasis a statutory curriculum should not impose one particular view but it should be left to the teaching profession to seek advice and make judgements. Frater's (1995) viewpoint on this is that the only thing certain about the teaching of English is that no one way is the correct way. Raban-Bisby (1995) is also concerned about the over emphasis on phonics and demonstrates how the Statements of Attainment at Level 1 in 1989 (DfES, 1989) have changed when compared to the 1994 Level Descriptors at Level 1 (SCAA, 1994). In 1989 the emphasis was on pupils 'recognising that print is used to carry meaning, are becoming interested in reading and can talk about it' alongside the recognition of letters or words in familiar contexts. By 1994 the criteria for attaining level 1 had changed to a need to use their alphabet and sound knowledge to read. Raban-Bisby sees this move as evidence of ignorance as to how children actually learn to read, suggesting that the 1994 proposals introduced a deficit model by which children entering school are taught a series of 'rules' for reading and writing divorced from their prior experiences.

Identification of Pupils not Developing Literacy Skills

For a number of decades there has been debate about standards of literacy and whether the reading abilities of our youngster have declined. Just as Beard (1990) and Roberts (1995) agree that literacy changes over time one could cite this as a possible reason for factions of society's view of falling standards as what children read and understand from text and what they then take from it has changed very much over the past fifty years (Young, 1997). Young see this trailing edge of poor readers as a legacy of the class system where teachers have low expectations because they excuse pupils' poor performances due to home situations and suggest it is an almost uniquely British problem. Whereas the data is quoted based upon a range of both national and international recent surveys Young made no reference to methods used to measure reading levels, which is surely an issue here. Brooks (1997) reporting on his research states that levels of reading in this country have remained stable since 1948. He suggests that the British education system works for those children who are average or above at reading but fails to identify or improve those at a barely functional level of literacy. He states that techniques of teaching reading over the last 30 years have made little difference to levels of literacy and that the way forward is early identification and remedial strategies such as Reading Recovery.

Budge (1997) suggests that whilst some researchers support the view that the reading ability of children has changed little since the 1950s others differ. A number of teaching unions argue that there has been deterioration since 1992 and blame the National Curriculum for overload that reduced the amount of time spent on reading in classrooms. Budge reports upon research carried out by Manchester University in five schools between 1988 and 1995. When assessed using the 'Primary Reading Test' the results for young children remained static but those of 11 year olds deteriorated. Percentages of children with a standard score below 85 increased from 10% to 18% and those children with a standard score above 115 fell from 22% to 7%.

Whilst accepting that the test used was outdated (published in 1981) the researchers argue that these results are valid as there was no marked deterioration shown throughout the range of scores. Although a range of schools were chosen there were few children with English as an additional language, this does not mean however that social or cultural bias did not have some effect on the results.

The National Literacy Strategy

Background and Development

Beard (1999) provided the following background to the National Literacy Strategy in his executive summary.

'The NLS has drawn its teaching approaches from successful initiatives in the USA and Australasia and derived its Framework for Teaching from that developed in the National Literacy Project, which was set up in 1996. The structure of a daily Literacy Hour is related to the yearly curriculum time calculated in the Dearing Review of the National Curriculum.' p. 4

However there are serious difficulties with Beard's viewpoint, which was written after the implementation of the NLS and could therefore be described as a justification for the literacy hour rather than rationale for its implementation.

The National Literacy Project, Literacy Task Force and the NLS

The National Literacy Project (Stannard, 1997) began as a five-year pilot running in 100 primary schools, initially those that were under achieving, and focused on two main structures, the framework of teaching objectives and the structure of a daily literacy hour. Considerable interest in the idea of a literacy hour was shown across the country. When the Literacy Task Force (1997) was set up it identified a 'long tail' of under-achieving children when compared to other countries and looked at the Literacy Project as a model.

In June 1998 Task Force published its the preliminary findings from the first cohort and reported they had found evidence of substantial progress in literacy. Findings from NFER and HMI Evaluation Reports of the Literacy Project showed that final test scores for pupils in the project schools were 8 to 12 months above what is normally expected.

A study at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne (Smith et al, 1999), whilst identifying some indicators of success following a first cohort of schools to implement the NLS does however suggest that sustainability of progress is a difficulty.

One must bear in mind however that the Literacy Project was not operating in a cross section of schools throughout the country but in a small number that had been identified as having particular characteristics. One could surely argue that the evaluation reports were not valid unless further evidence was available as to the expected progress of pupils in broadly similar schools. The outcome of the Task Force was that a National Literacy Strategy was produced in 1998 and a Framework for Teaching setting out the 'Literacy Hour' framework and teaching objectives was circulated to every primary school (DfEE, 1988).

Since the implementation of the NLS other literacy strategies are being added, the first of these was the introduction of 'Booster Classes' for Year 6 pupils. The DfEE allocated money for additional literacy and numeracy teaching in March 1999. Schools had to decide how such classes were to be run before the end of the financial year, a decision further hampered by the Easter school break. The money was to be spent on providing additional teaching time for those children who, with this additional teaching, could be expected to achieve a level 4 in their SATs. There was considerable confusion as to the way these classes could be set up. Original guidelines suggested that classes must be outside of the school day but they were later revised to allow additional teachers to be employed to withdraw groups of pupils during school time. The money was accompanied by additional guidance containing analysis of previous SATs, suggestions for work to be covered and some example lesson plans. Whereas the material was largely well received by teachers locally their views were that Booster Classes were all too little and too late, leaving a suggestion that the Government was panicking about the coming SATs and attempting to impact upon the results in order to make the NLS appear an effective one.

Whereas the Booster Classes were introduced under the premise that the Year 6 pupils had not had the benefit of the NLS the initiative continues at the present time for both Year 5 and Year 6 children, despite the said pupils having had three years of the strategy.

Less than two terms after the full introduction of the NLS came the pilot initiative for Additional Literacy Support (DfEE, 1999a). Here was a strategy for pupils in Years 3 and 4 who had not benefited from the NLS in Key Stage One designed to enable these pupils who had 'fallen behind' their peers to 'catch-up'. It involves groups of up to six pupils at a time working with a non-teaching assistant on a prescribed phonic programme during three of the group work sessions each week, for the other two days they were to read or write with the assistant or the class teacher. During the same term Key Stage Three conferences (DfEE, 1999b) were held throughout the country to 'inform' the secondary schools about the NLS, again prescribed materials were produced by the DfEE to show how Year 7 teachers could utilise the NLS within their lessons.

September 2001 sees the introduction of Early Literacy Support (DfEE, 2001). This support is designed for groups of pupils who have 'fallen behind' their peers in reception. These Year 1 pupils will, as in the Additional Literacy Support programme, receive a prescribed phonic based lesson delivered by a non-teaching assistant but this time the lesson is to take place outside of the literacy hour.

Alongside the major additions to the NLS outlined above there are a number of DfEE produced materials to be used alongside the Framework for Teaching (DfEE, 1998).

- Progression in Phonics – a CD Rom and book with additional strategies for those pupils who had not grasped the 44 phonemes defined in the NLS (DfEE, 1999c).

- Grammar for Writing – Video and book (DfEE, 2000c)

-Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs in the Literacy Hour--
a video and folder only available by request (DfEE, 2000d).

Reading Recovery

As the National Literacy Project acknowledges that it made use of some of the principles of Marie Clay's work in New Zealand a brief summary of her work is pertinent to my research. The Reading Recovery project first began in New Zealand in 1978 (Clay, 1979). Children are screened after they have been in school for one year. The screening involves letter identification, hearing and recording sounds in words to dictation, observation of any written vocabulary, observation of early literacy and concepts about print. Those children who have the most difficulty with reading and writing are chosen to enter the Reading Recovery programme.

For 30 minutes every day for between 12 and 20 weeks a specialist Reading Recovery Teacher teaches each child individually. The programme is different for each child and the starting point in each case is the child's strengths, working on what the child is able or is attempting to do. A typical lesson will cover; familiar books, re-reading yesterday's new book, letter identification, word making and breaking, writing a story and hearing sounds in words, assembling a cut-up story and reading a new book. Some key principles in the reading process are; the pupils must be reading text rather than words or sounds in isolation, all teaching is based on close observation, reading is seen as a problem-solving activity and teaching builds on the strengths and achievements of the learners. The programme is discontinued when the child reaches the average level of their class.

There is however some criticism that the gains reported in reading ages are short lived and the children later again fall behind their peers. It also seems that where LEAs opted into the project they did so following short term funding, often from Single Regeneration Budgets. When this money runs out many schools find that they cannot fund the teacher time it requires.

Reading Recovery cannot then follow the ethos of acting as a screening process for children aged six and placing them on a remedial programme.

Hofkins (1997) reporting on the Lewisham's Literacy 2000 project reminds us however that, as with any new initiatives, the first year usually produces good results that cannot thereafter be sustained. Frater (1995) suggests that the British version of Reading Recovery was not financed fully and the fundamental complex nature of reading development it puts forward is not being focused upon in our teacher training establishments. One must also remember that Reading Recovery was developed within a country with a network of special schools. Within the context of inclusion that exists within England there is a possible mismatch between the lower achieving pupils that are entering the programme here and those it was initially designed for.

The Structure of the National Literacy Strategy

The National Literacy Strategy states that the literacy hour should have begun in September 1998, whilst it is not compulsory my local LEA have stated that they expect all schools under their jurisdiction to implement the 'Hour'. The emphasis of the Framework for Teaching is on using children's reading to structure their writing. Objectives for each half-term are laid out for year 1 up to year 6 pupils, reception year is treated differently with targets for the whole year given. Within each half-term there is an equal balance of reading and writing and a balance between fiction and non-fiction work. Within these there are objectives for work at word, sentence and text level. Word level work contains phonics, spelling, vocabulary and handwriting. Sentence level work includes grammar and punctuation. Text level work includes comprehension and composition. Appendices give sight and spelling vocabulary lists, a hierarchy of phonic objectives and spelling work set out for each term.

The Government provided funding for the appointment of Literacy Consultants in all LEAs in order to ensure that the bottom achieving 10-20% of schools within each area, designated as in need of 'intensive support', received advice and support in order to implement the strategy. It was left to the individual LEAs to decide upon the central training and support that they felt able to offer other primary schools within their authority. The expectation was that all primary schools would have a Literacy Hour in place by the end of the Autumn Term 1998, unless they could show that their own policy and practice of teaching English was at least as effective as the National Strategy. Regional managers were appointed by the DfEE and trained the Literacy consultant. These sessions focussed on how the consultant should use the training pack provided in order to instruct two teachers from each of the intensive support schools in the strategy. Every primary school received a box of materials accompanied by videos and covering each area of the Literacy Hour.

Additional guidance on, amongst other things, Children with Special Educational Needs was sent to all schools as an Annex to the Framework for Teaching document. It sought to offer guidance on what it saw as two main groups of pupils. The first, and it states by far the largest, is a group who face minor difficulties in learning, these difficulties it puts down to; disadvantage either through background or schooling, gaps in their education through missed schooling or temporary hearing, physical, visual or emotional problem, frequent moves of school or poor teaching. It goes on to state that the factors holding these pupils back can be overcome through normal teaching strategies and that the NLS will be beneficial in enabling them to catch up with their year group. The second group of pupils are described as having severe and complex learning difficulties and who may therefore need different teaching strategies. Whilst accepting that some pupils may need to work on objectives below those set out for Reception year in the Framework teachers were told that they must not assume that the pupils cannot become part of the first group.

The annex goes on to state that when pupils are taken out of the literacy hour it should not be for the whole of the hour and the work they cover during that time should be 'parallel' to the class session. So here is the advice we awaited, for the first group of pupils we teach the NLS and they will 'catch up' with their peers and for the second group we can withdraw them as long as we plan parallel work for them to do. At this time no mention was made of any possibility of the additional 'bits' that were later to be added on to the NLS, namely Booster Classes, Additional Literacy Support and Early Literacy Support.

Evaluation of the National Literacy Strategy

Sainsbury, NFER

Marian Sainsbury (1998) drew together a report from questionnaires that were sent to each LEA in England. This was a survey of the Literacy Hours that took place during the spring term of 1998. Returns indicated that teachers outside the Literacy Project were using the ideas it put forward. Analysis of the Literacy Hours described defined two broad groups. The largest group of teachers employed an overall focus on teaching the skills of literacy. A second group focussed on understanding and responding to a particular text. Interestingly Sainsbury when discussing speaking and listening says,

‘Since all literacy hours are conducted through the medium of speaking and listening, there are clearly numerous opportunities in all of them to develop a range of the skills and understandings defined in the programmes of study.’ p. 19

Although the survey took place before the full implementation of the NLS already some discrepancies were apparent between the Literacy Hours seen and the coverage of the English programmes of study. Whereas reading was covered, sustained silent reading, children choosing their own texts and listening to literature read aloud were not reported to be happening within the Literacy Hours, similarly sustained writing and children’s own choices about their writing was not evident. Although speaking and listening was included in the Literacy Hours it was often not comprehensively covered. The survey ends by warning that ‘learning the skills’ must not detract from the pleasures of reading and suggests that there is plenty of scope within the Literacy Hour to ensure that this does not happen.

OFSTED

The Office for Standards in Education monitored and evaluated the National Literacy Strategy during its first year. This report drew upon observations of two Literacy Hours in each of 300 primary school as well as interviews with staff. The report (OFSTED 1999a) made comparisons with the previous year's SATs results, tracked children's progress from their previous attainment and analysed evidence drawn from inspections by HMI of literacy. The document contains a set of 15 main findings and nine points for action (see Appendix 7 for a list of these). The report states that the components of literacy hour were in place in most schools by the end of the Autumn Term 1998. Whilst recognising that it was too early in the NLS to be confident about any raising of attainment the 1999 Key Stage Two SATs for English showed a 5% rise in the number of pupils achieving level 4+. Whilst the report highlights the improving quality of teaching in the literacy hour over the year there are concerns about poor teaching of phonics. One of their points for action is that Key Stage 1 teachers require further training in the teaching of phonics and a more systematic approach is required in Years 3 and 4. Overall OFSTED's main findings were positive. They felt that the quality of teaching in Literacy Hour had improved over the year and there existed a significant move from, as they put it, 'hearing readers' to the 'teaching of reading'.

The University of Newcastle upon Tyne

A significant piece of research at Newcastle University was undertaken in June of 1999 for a paper to be present at the European conference on Educational Research in Finland in September of that year (Smith et al, 1999). The researchers looked at two cohorts of schools, the first cohort were drawn from schools who had piloted the project in January 1997 and the second from schools who began the NLS in September 1997. Two broad question areas were covered in the research; the differences within and between each cohort of schools and in-depth case studies in three of the schools.

Evidence is presented which demonstrates pupils have progressed under the NLS but cohort 1, i.e. those who have worked the longest with the NLS, did not make significantly more progress than cohort 2. Whilst this suggests that the effectiveness of the NLS may be difficult to maintain it is the latter of the question areas that is pertinent to my study into how working within the structure of the NLS framework can meet the needs of every child.

The researchers' case studies sought evidence to see if some pupils were benefiting from the NLS more than others. The conclusions they came to, drawn in part from interviews with teachers, suggested that the less able children were being left behind opening up a wider gap between themselves and the more able children.

SEN Pupils in the Literacy Hour

When reporting upon its evaluation of the first year of the strategy OFSTED included a section (OFSTED, 1999a, para 105 to 107) recording its findings about the teaching of the hour to pupils with special educational needs, stating that most children are either supported in class (doing exactly what we are not told) or withdrawn. These findings are reiterated in a publication from NASEN detailed below (Hinson, 1999), unfortunately in neither do we read any information about the number of pupils involved or the nature of their difficulties. There seems to be an assumption that children who are experiencing difficulties, whatever they may be, are taught differently in some way to their peers and the NLS is being taught in a way that excludes some pupils rather than creating inclusive classroom practice.

The publication 'Surviving the Literacy Hour' sought to put together a series of articles surrounding the issue of children with Special Educational Needs in the literacy hour class. The editor admits that rather than accounts of research the articles reflect the early experiences of teachers. Unfortunately several of the chapters only restate the contents of the Framework for Teaching document and add no new knowledge.

Where the authors have suggested strategies that might be used in class these draw more upon good teaching rather than specifics related to the Literacy Hour, for example Smith (1999) suggests that we must:

‘Make sure that you have some prior knowledge of pupils’ literacy difficulties.’

And

‘Use the information about pupils with problems to determine their learning programmes.’ p.19

She goes on to give advice about where to seat children with visual or hearing difficulties. Hinson (1999) presents the results of a questionnaire sent to members of NASEN. Ten schools responded and he summarised the findings although much of the chapter presents facts about the practicalities such as the make up of the classes. As the sample is small and diverse, only two infant schools replied one reporting that 25% of their children had SEN and the other 46% with SEN (one can only presume that this percentage relates to the number of children on their respective SEN registers), it tells us nothing about the types of difficulties that teachers may be experiencing in planning and teaching the Literacy Hour. The strategies that were reported upon consisted of supporting individuals or groups of children in class through the use of an additional adult or withdrawal to outside the classroom. There are no references to any strategies that would enable inclusive education within a mixed ability class without additional adult support.

Critique of the National Literacy Strategy

Amongst many professionals there were grave concerns about the NLS. The teachers unions all produced reports outlining the increased planning and preparation time they saw the NLS producing. The 'higher achieving' schools within the LEA stated that they felt to be under pressure to adopt a daily literacy hour which they felt might lead to a drop in standards. In particular many heads raised concerns about the loss of time to hear individual readers and to complete pieces of extended writing. Whilst they understood that the NLS was not statutory there was a worry that 'OFSTED will expect it' (see Appendix 3 for the concerns raised by Northtown's staff). At national level concerns were voiced about the lack of guidance for pupils with Special Educational Needs. When the additional guidance was published (DfEE, 1998) suggesting some flexibility in approach it was criticised as working from an assumption that such pupils would ultimately be able to '*catch up*'. References are made to different groupings possibly across ages by homogeneous prior achievement or by mode of access (Byers, 1999). This seems to conflict with the notion of mixed ability groups where pupils learn from one another with the lower achieving pupils being 'pushed' through working alongside others in the shared activities, a notion expressed in the Framework document itself.

The premise that underpins the NLS is that teachers should teach the whole class for the majority of the time and ability groups for the remaining time. How do the additional initiatives fit in with this idea? Groups of pupils in years 5 and 6 are withdrawn into Booster Classes, lower achieving pupils in years 3 and 4 are withdrawn during group work to complete a different programme to that of their peers and some year 1 pupils receive additional literacy work outside of the literacy hour. Should lead us to the conclusion that the NLS cannot meet the needs of all pupils?

There appears to be conflicts between what the Framework for Teaching sets out as good literacy practice, what is reported to be happening in classrooms and with my notion of what constitutes an inclusive literacy lesson. Wearmouth and Soler (2001) put forward a case that this conflict is inevitable as the Government's aims for inclusion directly contradict the pedagogical framework of the NLS. Whilst the Framework advocates whole class work it also through the Additional Guidance supports the idea that some children with special educational needs should be withdrawn. This withdrawal is further encouraged by the subsequent initiatives that were introduced for groups of pupils; booster classes, Additional Literacy Support, Early Literacy Intervention. Both NASEN (Hinsen, 1999) and OFSTED (1999a) report withdrawal taking place yet Bell and Best (1986) imply that children with special educational needs do not need different education from that of their peers. What they need, and indeed what their peers need, is a better curriculum delivered in a varied and accessible way and which takes note of an enlightened pedagogy.

Corden (1999) discusses the absence of speaking and listening objectives from the Framework for Teaching document, as my study developed this was for me a major point. Without focussed aims in this area there is a danger that speaking and listening becomes relegated to an add-on to the literacy hour rather than as MacLure (1994) sees it as vital to all competences. Moreover not only does the Literacy Strategy neglect speaking and listening, it sets up a model that precludes the discourse that is required to bring about new understanding. Dadds (1999) foresees this happening in the whole class and group time where there will be little time for children to discuss conflicting ideas.

One criticism of the literacy hour lays in the suggested use of additional adults in the classroom. Whilst recognising that such adults needed to be aware of the work covered in whole class time in order to be effective later in the hour, there were difficulties justifying their presence in that first 30 minutes. In some classrooms two or three additional adults are present.

I have observed non teachers effectively keeping children on task, encouraging them to participate or explaining and using materials to expand a point. There is nevertheless some criticism that they would be more effective working one-to-one or with a small group during that time. This is especially true when the additional adult is a support assistant employed to work with a particular child who has a statement of special educational needs and possibly more so when such a child may be struggling to understand some of the concepts as explained to the whole class. If, as suggested, such pupils are not benefiting from the NLS as much as other pupils (Smith et al, 1999) could additional support time be used more effectively?

The organisation of pupils into ability groupings as set out in the Framework for Teaching document was criticised widely by teachers who felt that their particular class of children did not fall into the prescribed 'five groups of six like ability children'. A more important criticism lies however in whether such groups are an effective way to develop literacy skills, research into mixed-ability groupings (Mroz et al, 2000) suggests otherwise. The study involved interviewing children who had been taught in mixed-ability and mixed-gender groups. It interprets the White Paper on education (DfEE, 1997d) as the government's stance on organising pupil according to their ability, a view also supported by HMI in 1996 when it recommended setting within primary schools as a way to combat underachievement (OFSTED, 1998). This is despite the Plowden Report (CACE, 1967) that had earlier condemned streaming as disadvantaging the younger pupils in each year group and doing little to aid the esteem of those who continually languished in the bottom groupings.

The children's responses provided the researchers with evidence that both low and high achieving pupils felt they had benefited from working in mixed-ability groups. The relevance of this research to my own study lies within the nature of the collaborative learning that took place.

The social constructivist approaches that advocate such learning are central to my view of an inclusive classroom as discussed in chapter 4. Literacy development comes about through interaction, including oral discourse, and engaging literacy skills within a meaningful context (Hall, 1987). The mixed-ability groups allowed opportunities for pupils to clarify their own thoughts through 'taking' others through the same processes they themselves had gone through.

One conclusion that research from Newcastle University (Smith et al, 1999) came to was that the NLS was having an impact upon the schools. Although the increases in National Curriculum English test results at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 were not significant improvements in pupil performance on a Suffolk Reading Scale and Performance Indicators in Primary Schools did demonstrate significant improvements, although interestingly cohort 1 schools who had been part of the NLS for longer had not improved significantly more. The researchers came to the conclusion that, whilst the NLS had had an impact, maintaining any progress could be difficult.

The National Literacy Project and Reading Recovery

Roger Beard (1999) was commissioned to write a paper on the background to the NLS. This attempt to justify the costs of the programme set out the origins of the main strategies but failed to disclose evidence as to how the New Zealand model would work when fundamental differences were obvious.

The Reading Recovery model is an individual pupil one. The NLS model puts forward a similar approach but as a strategy for a whole class for 16% of the hour.

Reading Recovery is a 'catch-up' model designed to meet the needs of those who have already fallen behind. The NLS is designed for all primary aged children.

The expectation is that when pupils have caught up with their peers following a time limited Reading Recovery programme they no longer need that particular input.

The NLS suggests that the majority of pupils will catch up with their peers, following the correct teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1 and following Additional Literacy Support in years 3 and 4, and will continue to benefit from the strategy for their full seven years at primary school.

- Where pupils are not making sufficient progress on the Reading Recovery programme they are referred to professionals for further testing and placement on special remedial programmes. The Government's expectation is that the NLS will meet the needs of all pupils.

Reason and Boote (1994) suggest that any model of literacy learning needs to combine meaning, phonics and fluency. Marie M. Clay (1989) maintains that in order for pupils to become competent readers they must combine a range of reading strategies; letter recognition and phonemes, the use of any picture cues, previous knowledge that the child brings to the situation, knowledge of syntax and the grammar of children's text. Children also need to read for meaning in order that they can make inferences when meeting unknown words. These ideas are taken up in the National Literacy Project (Stannard, 1997) where a 'Literacy Hour' containing work at text, sentence and single word levels is detailed. The Framework Document of the NLS however does contain a warning:

When pupils read familiar and predictable texts, they can easily become over-reliant on their knowledge of context and grammar. They may pay too little attention to how words sounds and how they are spelt. (DfEE, 1998, p4)

Whole Text Level

Britain is a multi-cultural society with the children in our schools coming from a diverse and culturally rich background, it is therefore inappropriate to continue with the expectation that all children will speak and write the Standard English of the educated upper classes. Cox (1995) accuses the 1994 list of prescribed text as not just culturally but also politically bias.

This is particularly worrying when one recalls that Sainsbury (1998) found that some teachers were basing their Literacy Hours on the interrogation of a particular text.

Raban-Bisby (1995) believes that the political thrust behind the curriculum reforms demonstrate a misunderstanding of education, expecting classrooms to be full of children from the same backgrounds at the same developmental stage of learning. He sees the 1994 English curriculum as one based on a model of children as 'empty vessels' waiting to be given knowledge, one that makes no attempt to value and use the rich and diverse nature of our children.

Dadds, (1999) suggests that a major aspect of measured intelligence in a literate society rests upon the ability to reflect on new vocabulary. This requires the setting up of opportunities for children to discuss ideas with others and interpret new meaning from any conflicts in understanding that arise. Adams (1997) states that readers are only able to interpret text as far as their vocabulary, syntactic, rhetorical, topical, analytic and social knowledge allows. She goes on to say that good readers do not need to use the higher order reading strategies that poor readers need to employ. The word recognition skills and knowledge of words in themselves in terms of spelling, irregularities and inconsistencies actually reinforce and extend the learning of language and meaning which text comprehension depends upon, this is at odds with any idea that vocabulary is extended through comprehension of text, certainly for good readers.

Word Level Work

The emphasis on word level work, and on phonics in particular became greater as the NLS began to be implemented. OFSTED's evaluation criticised the poor teaching of phonics (OFSTED, 1999a) and at national and regional level the Literacy Consultant were asked to place greater emphasis on the training material for phonic work and their monitoring of the teaching of it.

This emphasis on word level work is despite the fact that a phonetic approach is not the preferred learning style for all children. The impetus for the NLS was the perceived need for large numbers of children to 'catch-up' with their peer group in literacy through the daily literacy hour, yet during the Summer Term of 1999 we had the introduction of Additional Literacy Support Material for Years 3/4 that was designed for use with small groups of children withdrawn from the class. Whilst the games and activities that this material used are enjoyed by children and, during the pilot scheme run within the authority appears to be supporting some progress, its use conflicts with a daily literacy hour that benefits all pupils through its whole class shared work.

Discussion

Although there is some criticism of the assumptions Piaget drew from the experiments he conducted surrounding his views of a 'readiness to learn' new concepts (Donaldson, 1978) there exists the notion that children cannot develop new concepts until they are developmentally ready. This belief is at odds with a curriculum that prescribes content and progress through it so strictly. The 1994 English curriculum has a structure of accumulative knowledge built only upon that that is taught explicitly in school. Where is value given to, what is in this country, a diverse and culturally rich home background that plays such a large part in our children's education? Gregory (1996) reminds us that there is no single literacy but multiple ones that function in different ways within children's social and cultural lives. Dearing (1994) implies that the age of the child and progress through the levels are determining factors in defining curriculum content but these set up the conflict within the mixed-ability class. If there exists a time when children are developmentally ready to learn for example a particular grammatical concept it is surely determinable by an individual child's prior knowledge and understanding rather than their chronological age.

The National Literacy Strategy accepts that pupils in the initial stages may be studying objectives below those laid out in the framework document but maintains that they will soon 'catch up' and be placed appropriately. Accepting the relevance of Vygotsky's (1962) ideas on literacy as a cultural tool would, I feel, imply that the working as a whole class through a series of criterion-referenced objectives does not support the true meaning of literacy. He is clear that we must begin with what children already know and move them forward through instruction as explicit links to their prior understanding are necessary in order to gain true understanding. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development is not linear in nature but surrounds children's prior learning therefore an indiscriminate hierarchical list of objectives is meaningless when placed in the context of children's development.

The Literacy Strategy is happening at a time when successive governments have interfered with the conduct of teachers in the classroom. The teaching profession welcomed, by and large, the National Curriculum as a move towards consistency (Raban-Bisby, 1995). Teachers were informed that they were being told what the content should be but were free to decide upon the 'how it was taught' for themselves, subsequent rewrites of the curriculum, and in particular the advent of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, have demonstrated to the teaching profession the government's determination to direct even the 'how'. Now that the government has succeeded in introducing national tests, baseline in reception (QCA, 2000) and Standard Attainment Tests at the end of Key Stages (QCA, 1999), the focus is on assessment, including assessing teachers as a means of improving those test results.

Whilst the teaching profession accepts that any initiatives that help to increase pupil attainment are to be welcomed not every school in the country was having a problem with the teaching and learning of literacy. The National Literacy Project was based in a narrow subsection of schools with particular attributes, mainly surrounding poor attainment. There appear to be no reason to suspect that any claims surround the successes of the Project can legitimately be transferred to all other primary schools in the country and where it can be shown to have produced some rise in standards this may not necessarily be sustainable.

Chapter 4 Inclusive Education

Definitions of Inclusive Education

'...a fundamental principle of an inclusive school is that all children should learn together, where possible, and that schools must recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their students' (Salamanca Statement, 1994).

The above quote is a starting point for this chapter. The Green Paper (DfEE, 1997b) states that,

'Where pupils do have SEN there are strong educational, social and moral grounds for their education in mainstream schools' (p.34)

For many years the integration of such children has depended upon external factors with pupils being offered places in the 'least restrictive environment' (Fish, 1989). Inclusive education relies upon a restructuring of the mainstream schools in order that they can accommodate all children no matter what their individual needs may be, what Avramidis et al (2000) terms accommodation rather than assimilation. But of course placement is not the only issue one must consider, an inclusive school must provide an inclusive education, an environment where all children can learn alongside their peers rather than just being in the same building.

Integrated Schooling or Inclusive Education

When considering the issue of inclusive education boundaries are rather hazy. Some pupils may be integrated into a mainstream school, but only for certain subjects, other children may appear to be fully integrated spending all their schooling careers in mainstream but are in fact not being educated alongside their peers.

Withdrawal to remedial groups, streaming of children with bottom sets working on a different curriculum or in class support which effectively withdraws a child from the mainstream curriculum does not I believe constitute inclusive education.

Some recent research upon the situation within a number of LEAs (Ainscow et al, 1999) found that, for some authorities, the act of moving pupils from special to mainstream schools was based upon an assumption that they are included once they are there. The findings of the study suggest that this is not always the case and that LEAs need to be much more proactive in promoting inclusion. My study is an attempt to allow all the children within one class to work alongside their peers with access to the same curriculum.

Background to Inclusive Education in This Country

Early compulsory schooling

The difficulties that schools have in coping with the diverse needs of a classroom of pupils have been with us for a long time, since when compulsory education for all was introduced in the 1870's. As more received schooling so the numbers that were failing to learn increased (Hegarty 1993). In 1902, by which time LEAs were taking a leading role, provision was made for these pupils that led to an increasing numbers of special schools. The 1944 Education Act extended the range of pupil needs for which provision was made. Success or otherwise in acquiring literacy was used as one criteria in the identification of pupils with 'moderate learning difficulties'.

Warnock and towards the Code of Practice

In the 1976 Education Act sections were passed to implement comprehensive education in the secondary sector (these sections were repealed in the 1979 Education Act). It was not successful in implementing this and one section of the 1976 Act that was never implemented was that which referred to special education. It was left to the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) to introduce the relativist notion about what constitutes 'special educational needs'. The 1981 and 1983 Education Acts legislated many of the Warnock recommendations and provided the foundation for the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs published in 1994 (DfE, 1996a). This Code provided a shared text on the identification of children with 'special educational needs' and was used in tribunal cases to decide whether or not children were receiving their entitlement to having their 'needs' identified, assessed and met. The subsequent identification of children with Special Education Needs led to increased numbers of such pupils educated within mainstream settings. Some LEAs went further and integrated pupils into mainstream who would previously have received their education in a special school.

This led to the closure of special schools in some authorities, who then went on to provide education within mainstream as the norm for as many children as possible, it is within a context such as this that my study took place.

Excellence in schools

The first White Paper of the new Labour Government was Excellence in Schools (July 1997c). The document covers a wide range of areas and set out some aims to be achieved by 2002. In chapter 2 some of the stated aims are;

- At least an hour each day devoted to both literacy and numeracy in every primary school.
- National guidelines and training for all primary teachers on best practice in the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
- A great improvement in achievements in maths and English at the end of primary education, to meet national targets.

Throughout the chapter strategies are described that are designed to achieve the target of 80% of 11 year-olds reaching the standards expected for their age in English. The 20% of children who, presumably, will not reach these standards are not discussed.

Excellence for all children

Following the White Paper, Excellence in schools, came a Green Paper (DfEE, 1997d) Excellence for all children: meeting special educational needs. This was a consultative paper on the government's proposals for raising the achievements of children with special educational needs over the following five years.

The paper summaries six themes for its approach, among them is;

-while recognising the paramount importance of meeting the needs of individual children, and the necessity of specialist provision for some, we shall promote the inclusion of children with SEN within mainstream schooling wherever possible...

The paper suggests that the implementation of the policies set out in Excellence in Schools, particularly tackling difficulties of literacy and numeracy at an early age, will lead to a decrease in the number of children identified as having special educational needs at secondary schools. The paper states that it has a commitment to reducing paperwork, shifting the emphasis from procedures to practical support and away from remediation to prevention and early intervention. This rhetorical comment has been reiterated since but schools have, as yet, little evidence to suggest such a change is happening. A National Advisory Group on SEN considered the results of the consultation and recommended that a new Code of Practice was required, unfortunately some three years later schools are still awaiting this guidance.

Special Educational Needs

Legislation

After the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) suggested that up to one in five children may have special educational needs at some time within their school career the schools were left with the problem of identifying these pupils. The 1981 Act brought about a definition:

'A child has a 'learning difficulty' if he has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his age...'

'[*When learning difficulties*] reach the point at which additional or alternative provision is required [*they*] give rise to special educational needs'

The Code of Practice (DfE, 1994a) was an attempt to bring some standardisation and offer guidance that could be tested through the courts. C. of P. 2:1 states that;

“A child has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.”

It then defines a child with a learning difficulty as one who;

“...has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age”

Or

“...has a disability which either prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities of a kind provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority”

In terms of the child identified as having specific or general learning difficulties with regard to literacy in terms of the Code of Practice the criteria are laid down. Pupils must be working at levels of the National Curriculum below those identified as the 'norm' for their age. There are however many terms and phrases with the Code of Practice that are not defined fully and which are therefore open to interpretation, where for example it talks of 'significant difficulties'. There is some definition of difficulties during discussion surrounding statutory assessment when national curriculum levels are to be used as a measure of difficulty, but this is only relevant to the small percentage of pupils who will enter statutory assessment. I also believe that, despite any stated intentions, the Code of Practice has sustained and reinforced a deficit model. The statementing procedure is now a gateway to resources, rather than assessment looking at children's individual needs the focus is on a comparison with 'the norm' in terms of National Curriculum levels. But these statemented children are the minority, schools and carers are concerned with much larger numbers of pupils who they identify as having difficulties acquiring literacy. It may be that the underlying problem is that,

‘...what counts as progress and improvement is problematic and contains contradictions...there is no overall and coherent set of values which can justify policy and practice in all levels in education...no single and exclusive value or principle, whether it be equality of individuality or social inclusion, can encompass what is commonly considered to be worthwhile.’

Norwich, 1996 p. 100

Barriers to Learning

Roberts (1995) puts forward a notion of two distinct reasons for the failure of some children to develop literacy skills. The first, he says, encompasses definable causes that can often be remedied, these are 'within child' difficulties such as dyslexia or auditory/visual problems.

For these children a 'bottom up' approach to reading leads us to assume a deficit 'within child model' where they lack the particular code breaking skills required of them. The second group of children, whose difficulties are mainly within school and cannot be attributed to deficit, disability or impairment, are predominantly found within the lower social-economic group. This is a much larger group and less easily remedied, appearing not to have distinct, definable cause other than social and cultural. There remains little doubt that a child's background is a major causal factor in their development of literacy.

Considering the literature surrounding school effectiveness one can draw out particular strands that characterise effective schools; good leadership and management, high staff morale, high expectations of all its pupils, low staff turnover, high quality teaching and good level of resources. OFSTED found that schools in socially deprived areas did not have these characteristics (OFSTED, 1993). Children then can be considered doubly disadvantaged, their home background may be impoverished and their local school may not have the characteristics of an effective school. What is interesting is that the NLS also distinguishes between the difficulties that children have in a similar way to Roberts in their Annex on '*SEN pupils and the Literacy Hour*'. Although Roberts suggests that the second and larger group of pupils, 'whose difficulties are mainly within school and cannot be attributed to deficit, disability or impairment', present a much greater problem the NLS disagrees. The literacy strategy, if taught effectively, is said to be all that these youngsters require in order to 'catch up' with the peers.

Literacy Difficulties

Although the English National Curriculum (QCA, 1999) has identified levels of attainment by which children are judged throughout their school career it is very difficult to find any consensus as to what being literate actually means. Frater (1995) writes that the only thing we can comment upon without confusion is functional literacy, which he then defines as,

'a match between an individual's abilities and the demands of his/her employment and lifestyle.' p8

He sees this inability to define literacy to be one of the causes of the debate surrounding standards. Ever since the 1870s assessments have been made but Frater states that the measures of competence against which 'success' is judged have constantly changed. In the push to 'produce' a literate workforce the intrinsic value in reading and writing seems to have been put to one side. Indeed one of the criticisms of the National Curriculum and later the National Literacy Strategy is that they have pushed out the time that could be devoted to the enjoyment of reading (Sainsbury, 1998), within this climate there will be those who do not succeed.

Social and economical

Maslow (1943) suggests that there exists a hierarchy of need. If children are to learn, he says, there are some fundamental needs that must first be met. If children are not loved, fed, feel safe or kept warm they will not be predisposed to learn. As will be discussed, the school that is the focus for my study is in a socially deprived area and some children come to school without having their basic needs met and this can be a barrier to learning. Ruddle (2001) suggests that providing food and drink before the assessment test was a possible factor in raising attainment levels in her school and the model of breakfast clubs is becoming increasingly common.

There are often many causal factors in the disaffection equation and when children are disaffected they do not make willing participants. The reasons behind their disaffection may be many, including a response to unsuitable or irrelevant experiences in school. Where children are disrupting lessons or taking little part in them they will often find it difficult to attain the learning objectives being taught.

Two things often then happen, children begin to struggle with the lesson content, perceive themselves as failing and become worried about trying due to fear of failure or other children become the class clown, enjoying the 'fame' of disrupting the lessons and refusing to co-operate with authority (Holt, 1969).

Mismatch between the National Curriculum and the needs of the child

The Government sees the acquisition of a literate workforce as a desirable product and the implementation of the National Curriculum and more recently the National Literacy Strategy are part of the developments introduced to bring this about. As education becomes more and more directed and managed by the Government the country's school system is seen by many as a method of social engineering. The end product of schooling is then viewed as average or above, success for those with 5 or more GCSE passes at level C or above or failure for those not able to achieve this. The failure by the Government to recognise the diversity of the population and the resistance to any values placed by society on anything other than academia is catastrophic for schools today. The drive towards a literate, numerate and academic achieving society is leading to increasing numbers of disaffected pupils in our schools for whom the National Curriculum may not be appropriate in terms of meeting their needs.

Whereas Secondary schools are working with the Government to look at meeting the needs of disaffected pupils in a number of ways, by for example creating flexibility in the curriculum at Key Stage 4, as yet no such initiative is available at primary level. Schools are left then with a mismatch between the curriculum they are expected to deliver and the needs of the pupils. This mismatch is arguably the cause of disaffection amongst the school population. Coulby and Gulliver (1987) suggests that disruptive or deviant behaviour occurs because of a

'mismatch between the working class values of the community and the middle class curriculum schools impose' p144

Identification of Children Considered to Have Special Needs

It could be argued that the difficulties that children have in acquiring literacy have not changed over the years but our identification of them has. Taking the central idea that all children have a 'right to education within a mainstream setting wherever possible' (Salamanca statement, 1994) and that difficulties only arise at the interface of school and the child. Rather than a learning difficulty seen as a deficit model within the child is it not a problem within the education system? Just as creating a literate society is placed high upon the political agenda the way in which schools operate and the curriculum they teach is driven by forces outside the educational system.

True integration for all children is only achieved by creating the classroom where, having accepted the constraints of curriculum we are obliged to teach, we find ways to make it accessible to all, however this is a simplification of a complex area. For some children, such as those with severe, complex and multiple difficulties, a mainstream classroom could never meet their needs. The question is of course how far along the continuum is a child before this conclusion is reached? Even with the guidance provided by the Code of Practice there are no clear-cut answers to this and other factors such as parental preference, school places and the costs of placements all add to the debate.

Inclusion For All?

Inclusion as a Basic Human Right

The World Conference on Special Needs Education agreed a 'Framework for Action' (UNESCO Salamanca Statement 1994). The Framework assumes that:

'...human differences are normal and that learning must be adapted to the needs of the child, rather than the child fitted to the process.'

It goes on to call upon those countries without a background of special schools to establish a model of inclusive schools rather than special schools. In contrast to this view one must not dismiss the work of the special school sector. They are inspected against a framework that includes many of the same criteria as mainstream schools and for many pupils a special school placement is the means by which they can make progress.

Over recent years the term 'integration' has been superseded by the notion of inclusion (Thomas, 1997). Thomas goes on to suggest that where the focus was on integration it was concerned mainly with issues of placement and relied upon external school factors. For inclusion to take place the schools themselves had to restructure to accommodate the needs of all children. Avramidis et al (2000) view this restructuring as accommodation as part of a human rights agenda. Whilst agreeing with the spirit of the Green Paper, Excellence for All Children (DfEE, 1997d) they maintain that, by being subject to the 1981 Education Act regarding resourcing and the expectation that the integration of such pupils will not have an adverse effect upon the education of others, the Paper does not promote a true picture of inclusivity.

An Inclusive Society

Mittler (1999) suggests that an inclusive approach to education should also take account of those pupils who are disadvantaged due to social and economic factors. He says that a disproportionate number of children from such disadvantaged sector of society are identified with learning or behavioural difficulties. It follows that any solutions must not only concern the reform of schools but be part of a wider approach that reflects the needs of the society in which they operate. He goes on to suggest that these disadvantaged children make up a large percentage of pupils with moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties and do not have the powerful lobby that some groups have. He cites those minority groups such as dyslexia, sensory and movement disorders, autism, and attention deficit disorders that go across the whole social spectrum and therefore have articulate parent groups that lobby on their children's behalf. Although the Warnock Committee (DES, 1978) was instructed not to consider poverty or social disadvantage as a handicap to learning (Mittler, 1999) any moves towards an inclusive educational system must surely ensure that particular needs arising from them are met.

Inclusion as an Effective Model for Learning

Social constructivism in the classroom

Although the context on which Vygotsky (1962) based his work was not an inclusive settings I feel that certain elements of his philosophy hold true within the mainstream setting of my study. He is clear that learning can only take place within a social setting. Special schools, or even to an extent small withdrawal groups, can instruct children but cannot prepare them for the interactions that occur within a less homogenous group. Children learn not only from adults but also from the children around them. They learn by copying routines and transferring their new knowledge to other situations. It follows therefore that children who have difficulty acquiring literacy will benefit by good role models who can demonstrate, for example, what 'good reading' sounds like.

Watson (2001) discusses the potential of social constructivism when working with pupils who are having difficulties in the classroom. She relates her ideas to Vygotski's Zone of Proximal Development and suggests that if learners are helped to build their own understanding by the scaffolding of teachers they become able to regulate their own learning through metacognition, thus learning must be a 'shared activity' that takes place within a social, interactive classroom. It was this constructivist viewpoint that led me towards the emphasis on oral language within my study and the focus on whole class work that would provide opportunities for adult 'scaffolding' and peer tuition. Although the Framework for Teaching document makes much of the strategies of modelling, demonstrating and scaffolding Corden (1999) points out there are limited opportunities within the hour for the type of 'creative conflict' that constructivist theory suggests is necessary for children to assimilate new concepts. This may however be down to interpretation as Sainsbury (1998) is clear that there is sufficient flexibility within the document to ensure the necessary oral discourse can occur.

When considering the relative effectiveness of mainstream or special schools in meeting the needs of children there is a major difficulty in making comparisons between the types of approach. It is a fact however that in terms of OFSTED inspection criteria special schools are around four times more likely to be identified as failing to provide an acceptable standard of education and to be in need of special measures (Davies, 1997), but that may suggest an inadequacy in the inspection process than any fault with the special schools. Richmond (2000) highlights the inappropriateness of the OFSTED criteria as a conclusion to his report, stating that;

'Desirable outcomes of education are a matter of opinion.
However, the OFSTED view of what is worthwhile does
not apply equally to all the nation's children' p.23

Thomas (1997) concludes that following the lack of valid evidence to either support or reject inclusive education society must uphold the basic right of children to receive mainstream schooling. The article was written over three years ago at a time when the Government had not yet made clear their intentions to promote inclusivity but Thomas is clear that this is the way forward for the future. He feels that children will be less tolerant and accepting of the diverse nature of society if some pupils are segregated in special schools. Whereas this may be true in some instances the converse of this is the child who is unhappy in a mainstream school. Whilst the majority of children may be tolerant and accepting of peers who are 'different' from themselves there are others who will take this opportunity to tease and bully.

Maslow (1943) devised a 'hierarchy of needs' based upon his theory of human motivation. This suggests that intellectual development cannot take place until other basic needs in personal and social areas are met. Of fundamental importance, Maslow says, is the need to meet physiological and safety criteria. The safety need, within a school setting, can only be met by a consistent approach and, at least for some children, familiarity of routine. Emotional safety comes from trust that children build up in both the teacher and their peers and, moving up the hierarchy, a feeling of belonging and participating generates self-esteem. Within a school situation one could suggest that these 'needs' can only be met through the cultivation of an inclusive classroom, one where everyone is respected and has a part to play. Critics of this approach would argue that, for some children, the security of smaller classes or groups is required.

The Inclusive School

Sayer (1983) suggests that in fact all schooling, i.e. away from the ordinary home environment, is in fact a form of special education. He blames the 1981 Act for setting up a system of assessment arrangements for children with special educational needs that differ from those carried out for all children.

He argues that every child has the right to receive appropriate education in an ordinary school and that schools must be committed to providing this and LEAs committed to resourcing the schools to do so. LeRoy and Simpson (1996) however view the cry for more resources and support from external agencies as a negative step, suggesting that true inclusion is not about funding and resources but about developing the vision required.

In her book 'Supporting Special Educational Needs in Secondary School Classrooms' Jane Lovey (1995) makes some underlying assumptions about the type of support children receive, suggesting that non-teaching assistants have a medical support role or one where there are physical needs to be met. Supporting children's learning, she seems to suggest, is largely undertaken by support teachers but it seems to me that much of the provision Lovey describes I see being delivered by a range of non-teaching adults in local schools. Unfortunately we learn little about the population she interviewed and which sources different statements are attributed to. Lovey goes on to discuss the perceived hierarchy of various types of teachers with peripatetic support teachers receiving the least respect from pupils, of relevance here as this describes a major part of my role within the school study. Although she is in no doubt that they are needed to implement IEPs from stage 2 onwards Lovey has much to say about the relative status of support teachers. She suggests that other staff and pupils see them as a type of 'second class teacher' with pupils regarding them as helpers who have no status and can be ignored. Whilst denouncing this attitude Lovey herself refers to support teachers as leaving demanding and responsible positions or taking a break from full time teaching.

The Inclusive Classroom

Hemmeter (2000) focussed her work on children with disabilities but her discussion is equally pertinent to the mixed ability classes within this country.

She states that for inclusion to be successful all pupils must,

‘...be involved in activities and routines with their typically developing peers.’

She goes on to suggest that schools need to move on from viewing inclusion as a ‘placement’ issue to looking at how all pupils can be involved in ongoing classroom activities and routines.

The students who are the foci of my study were giving concern to the school because of their behaviours. Clough and Lindsay (1991), Vaughn et al (1996), Villa et al (1996) and Chazan (1994) are amongst those who have examined the integration of pupils and found that pupils exhibiting emotional and behavioural difficulties were seen as causing more concern and stress than any other types of Special Educational Needs pupils. For a successfully inclusive classroom a way must be found to accommodate such pupils and ensure that they do not prevent others from learning. The school in my study had set up a ‘unit’ to cater for those pupils causing most difficulties in the classroom, this is described in Chapter 7. The unit was run on a behaviourist model, using rewards and sanctions to elicit sought behaviour. Although I argue in Chapter 6 that some elements of this approach are used in almost every classroom the extreme nature of the unit had an effect upon all pupils. This provision through withdrawal leads to a view of difficulties as a within child problem rather than encouraging teachers to look at the curriculum and their delivery of it. Wearmouth (1997) goes further and suggests that many teachers do not believe that differentiation has a place in their classroom. In not giving all pupils equal opportunities to access the curriculum teachers are, she states, maintaining the hierarchy of pupils’ abilities, which they themselves hold, and which they resist attempts to change.

Lovey (1995) suggests that many teachers supporting in class intervention rather than withdrawal work as a way of creating an inclusive classroom do so because they view it as the 'done thing'. How and where children are supported is a conflict at the centre of an inclusive classroom.

Wearmouth and Soler (2001) suggest that the National Literacy Strategy is at odds with the principles for inclusion set out in The National Curriculum for England and Wales (QCA, 1999) suggesting that the key principles for inclusion stress teaching for diversity whereas the Literacy Hour is inappropriate for the learning needs of many. If there is a mismatch between the curriculum and the needs of individual pupils withdrawal in any form surely places the difficulty within the child rather than where it truly lies – at the interface.

Donaldson (1978) reminds us that when we look at 'failure to learn' the difficulties lay not in the child but in the inability of the teacher and the student to come to terms with the communication problem. Bruner (1990), Lima (1997), Shoesmith (1999) and many others are certain that just like literacy, illiteracy cannot exist within a vacuum. They are both products of a social, cultural and historical environment. Shoesmith discusses the children labelled as having 'learning difficulties', describing them as a product of the school systems as, outside of school and certainly in later adult life, they do not have 'special educational needs'. It became clear to me that rather than search for some 'magic remedial programme' through which to improve the literacy learning of particular children I needed to investigate the whole picture of a literacy lesson and trying to make sense of the events through analysis from a variety of stances in order to ascertain how the lesson could be accessible to all.

Chapter 5 Schools 'Causing Concern'

Government Legislation and Initiatives

Office for Standards in Education

In 1995 a change in the way that school performance was monitored occurred. Every school would undergo a formal inspection on a tri-annual basis by a team of Her Majesty's Inspectors. A Framework for the Inspection of Schools (OFSTED, 1995) set down the criteria by which schools should be judged. The inspectors have to report on the context of the school, the outcomes of the school and the contributory factors to those outcomes. The framework splits the outcomes of the school into three: (i) attitudes, behaviour and personal development, (ii) attainment and progress and (iii) attendance. The contributory factors concern the provision that the school provides, including teaching, and the management of the school. Lesson observations form a central part of the inspection process and, alongside the scrutiny of data and discussions, they are evaluated to form judgments as to the quality of teaching and learning taking place. Where overall findings are judged to be unsatisfactory the school is reported to be 'causing concern'. There are different categories of schools 'causing concern'.

Schools Causing Concern

DfEE Circular 6/99 Schools Causing Concern explains how the powers of intervention available to the LEA and Secretary of State may be used. It summarises the procedures to be followed for schools causing concern. Three different categories of schools causing concern are noted, Special Measures, Serious Weaknesses and Schools Causing Concern.

Special Measures; these are identified through OFSTED inspection by Registered Inspectors and HMI. They are found to be failing or likely to fail to provide an acceptable standard of education to their pupils. Annex 1 of *The OFSTED Handbook* sets out the characteristics of such a school:

‘Educational standards achieved

- Low attainment and poor progress in the subjects of the curriculum by the majority of pupils or consistently among particular groups of pupils. This will be evident in poor examination, National Curriculum assessment and other accredited results;
- Regular disruptive behaviour, breakdown of discipline or high levels of exclusions;
- Significant levels of racial tension or harassment;
- Poor attendance by a substantial proportion of pupils or by particular groups of pupils, or high levels of truancy.

Quality of education provided

- A high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, including low expectations of pupils;
- Failure to implement the National Curriculum;
- Very poor provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- Pupils at physical or emotional risk from other pupils or adults in the school;
- Abrasive and confrontational relationships between staff and pupils.

The management of efficiency of the school

- Ineffectiveness of the head teacher, senior management or governors;
 - Significant loss of confidence in the head teacher by the staff, parents or governors;
 - Demoralisation and disenchantment amongst staff or high levels of staff turnover or absence;
 - Poor management and inefficient use made of the resources, including finance, available to the school;
 - Poor value for money provided by the school.'
- (OFSTED, 1995 p15)

The document amplifies the above statements in Part II. It also states that the decision to place a school in special measures will depend upon the extent to which the above characteristics are seen, one feature alone would not sufficiently warrant placing a school in special measures. The exceptions to this would be where there was,

'widespread and significantly poor attainment and progress, risk to pupils or the likelihood of a breakdown of discipline...' (OFSTED, 1995 p16)

Serious weaknesses; again identified through OFSTED inspection these schools, while not failing, are found to have serious weaknesses. There is a perceived danger that such schools are more likely to be identified as 'failing' at a subsequent inspection. An important aspect of this category is that a judgement can only be made,

'after the judgment that the school is giving an acceptable standard of education has been agreed.'

(OFSTED, 1995 p20)

Schools which become a cause for concern since their last inspection; this category is very different from the previous two. Such a school is not identified by OFSTED but the LEA should identify these schools in order that work can be done to stop them falling into one of the above categories at their next inspection.

DfEE Circular 6/99 goes on to set out what HMI, LEA and the governing body must do. This is particularly relevant to the school that is the subject of my research as it was nearing the date when it will have been in Special Measures for two years. Current legislation states that a school must be removed from Special Measure within that time, be closed or given a fresh start. For a school in Special Measures the LEA must submit to the DfEE and HMCI its own assessment of the school's ability to implement the governing body's action plan. Hopefully the LEA will already be aware that a school may fall into this particular category following an OFSTED inspection through its own monitoring procedures. It remains to be seen whether the increased devolution of funding to schools and the decreased monitoring role both that and the Code of Practice; LEA and School Relations (DfEE. 1999) bring about less LEA awareness. The Code makes very clear that LEA should not carry out a pre-inspection, even where schools request and agree to pay for it. As Richmond (2000) points out when entering any test situation one needs to have knowledge about the nature and scope of what is required and therefore an LEA must, if not allowed to use the same framework document as OFSTED, at least be scrutinising the same data by using similar criteria. It could be argued that as the inspections have the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress as their priority any work that LEAs do that challenges schools to raise standards (as the Code of Practice says they must) will prepare schools for OFSTED.

Following the inspection

At the first monitoring visit made by HMI a judgement is made upon, amongst other things, the quality of the action plan and the LEA statement about it and the effectiveness of the LEA's current and future support to the school. In my LEA a senior adviser is appointed as the link person for any schools who fall into the categories of Serious Weaknesses or Special Measures, in addition a senior adviser is also allocated where schools are deemed by the LEA to be in danger of falling into those categories. The LEA Development Plan allocates additional central funding that is reserved for extra work in such schools and those in the first two categories are helped to draw up their own Action Plans. Such plans must address the key issues raised in the inspections. This intervention in proportion to need is a major thrust of the LEA and School Relations document (DfEE, 1999). Schools outside of these categories within the LEA have been pushing for further devolved monies whereas the LEA states that it needs to retain funding to support the schools causing concern. A local difficulty is that the vast majority of schools causing concern over the past few years are in the centre and north of the town. These are precisely the same schools that are receiving additional funding from initiatives such as the Single Regeneration Bid, Education Action Zone and Ethnic Minorities Attainment Grant. This additional funding brings with it an expectation that the school shows how it will raise standards over and above those expected if the school did not receive extra monies.

Effects of Being Labelled as a School Causing Concern

Where a school has undergone an OFSTED inspection and 'labelled as a cause for concern' the effect upon the school personnel and the community should not be under estimated. The Code of Practice LEA-School Relations stipulates that a concern that might trigger an LEA to make a representation to a Governing Body appointing a new head teacher is,

'The candidate is currently, or was recently, the head teacher or a senior teacher at a school which was found on inspection to require special measures or to have serious weaknesses, and the inspection report found that the failure or weaknesses were due in part or whole to deficiencies attributable to the candidate's performance.'

DfEE, 1999 p.37

It is difficult to imagine a school where the 'educational standards achieved', 'quality of education provided' and 'the management and efficiency of the school' would not be, at least in part, attributed to the head teacher. For less senior members of staff they too are in a difficult situation. Where a report is damning towards their own performance do they accept or deny the criticisms? Donaldson (1978) suggests that such teachers only have two options, place the blame on the pupils or accept it themselves.

Critique of the OFSTED Inspection Process

One of the overall assumptions that an OFSTED inspection makes is that all schools are equally capable of achieving as well as the most successful schools; all that is deemed to be required is intensity of effort. Schools are compared, partly, on the basis of their SATs results when it could be argued that such assessments are not a good measure of the effectiveness of a school. Progress that pupils make is surely a better measure of effectiveness and yet progress against 'norm' are considered rather than value added. For pupils with a statement of special educational need there is no requirement to report that child's attainment but only their progress. Richmond (2000) argues that if it is inappropriate to assess the attainment of these pupils against the average attainment of children the same age it must be inappropriate for all children. If schools are to have an inclusive approach any inspection process must accept the diversity of pupil individuality.

Richmond goes on to point out that there are many other areas of achievement besides national assessments such as Standard Assessment Tests or General Certificate of Secondary Education, suggesting that rather than viewing the 'whole' child and preparing them to be an active participant in society OFSTED seek a much narrower view relying upon attainment in curriculum areas as an indicator of an effective school. It could be argued that these other qualities, ones concerning personal and social development such as self-reliance, enjoyment and integrity, are equally if not more important. The National Curriculum 2000 (QCA, 1999) is to be implemented from September 2000 and has newly defined programmes of study for Citizenship and Personal, Health & Social Development. Whereas there has been some attempt to link these notions throughout other subject areas it is superficially done with just one suggestion of an objective that could be a PSHE opportunities in English at Key Stage Two.

A situation that often happens following a poor OFSTED is the movement of teachers. Where teachers were, or felt that they were, doing a 'good job' and are not to blame for a bad report they can either continue to work in a difficult situation and hope that the school can rectify the position or they can 'get out'. Many good teachers do leave 'failing schools' because of the fear of being labelled a 'failing teacher' or because the job itself within such schools becomes too stressful. Schools in special measures are subject to visits on a termly basis from the lead inspector in addition to numerous LEA monitoring visits. A deputy head recently told me,

“We would be all right if they would just leave us alone for a bit. They (*the inspector and the LEA*) are always here telling us what's wrong but never telling us what to do about it, or if they do it's more paperwork.”

And from a head teacher,

“I've seen what other schools have to do and they expect us to do much, much more. It isn't fair this (*the assessment policy*) is way more than in XXX School and yet she (*lead inspector*) says it's not detailed enough. I've asked for help from the LEA but they just say I've got to stand on my own, and then they come and tell me what I'm doing wrong.”

Both the above staff has since left the schools they were in.

The round of teachers' union conferences at Easter 2000 called yet again for a decrease in the stress levels placed upon schools staff by OFSTED inspections. This call follows a number of suicides by teachers unable to cope with the criticisms levelled at them by the process. A process that, it could be argued, is flawed in its conception.

Unlike a business, schools cannot be 'measured' only against output, i.e. in terms of student attainment, especially when there is serious doubt as to whether the student attainment that schools are forced to strive for is a legitimate target. With a government imposed National Curriculum led, at least in part, by a push from business to produce a workforce we are in danger of neglecting important aspects of children's development. Although the OFSTED framework points towards a need for pupils' 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' it is a small aspect that together makes up less than 7% of an overall judgement and is not the basis alone as an indicator of cause for concern.

A particular strategy to 'turn failing schools around', that of seconding in an experienced head teacher to help draw up and implement an action plan, is becoming increasingly prevalent and was especially praised by OFSTED when my LEA was inspected. However Ball (1987) suggests that whereas schools do need strong head teachers there are many other factors that contribute to a successful school, suggesting that where an experienced head teacher has been deployed into a school causing concern there is some evidence to suspect the task is beyond one person. Of over riding concern is the market orientated approach that suggests that schools can be run in the same way that a successful director might be brought into a failing business. Whereas a failing business can be viewed as a producer, either of a service or of goods a school is different in nature. The effect of the OFSTED process is that it sets school against school as would be more appropriate in a competitive market place.

Where it has been suggested that such schools should merge with a more successful one within the locality there would seem, to me, to be a danger of pupil movement from one school to the other. Such an initiative fails to recognise the underlying nature of schools, which exist within and are mirrors of a community.

Where the community is in difficulty, because of the economical and social circumstances the families are in, the school alone cannot overcome the difficulty. Instead it must work with the whole community and their external support services. No 'super head' can overcome the poverty and social deprivation of some children and yet without their basic needs met Maslow (1943) would suggest they are not able to learn. The Economist, in its leader, (1999) however has given its support to such moves, urging the government to take its reforms further and ditch the notion of a 'one size fits all' form of education. It goes on to recommend allowing popular schools to expand and failing ones close, countering any criticism that it would be the socially disadvantaged children that would be attending the poorer schools by pointing out that such schools already exist.

It is clear from the statistics within my LEA what happens when a school becomes a cause for concern. Some parents move their children to other schools within the area. This fall in roll then in turn leads to less budget share and thus less money to spend on staffing or resources. For some schools the deficit created can lead to staff cuts. The school is then faced with trying to pull itself out of special measures but without the means to keep existing staffing levels, or to entice experienced teachers, and without the money to spend on the resources they may need. Other families do not have the transport available to move their children out of the neighbourhood to other schools or the financial means to move to a better area.

It is worrying that a major priority, in terms of OFSTED inspections and LEA monitoring is that schools must ensure 'best value'. There is a danger that in order to fulfil these criteria schools are pushed to 'producing' children who meet the various assessment targets. In an inclusive system surely an equal value must be placed upon all children's achievement. The child who managed an above average level in a Standard Attainment Test may or may not be fulfilling their potential and may or may not be working as hard as the child working towards level 1.

The inclusive school must recognise and give credence to the, sometimes very small, steps forward that pupils with Special Educational Needs make as well as catering for the gifted and more able pupils. This fundamental guiding principle must be recognised by the monitoring or inspection bodies.

How Northtown School came to be Identified as 'Failing'

The OFSTED inspection that placed Northtown School in special measures took place in 1997. Against the above stated criteria for such placement the inspection report noted the following; (extracts taken from the school's Inspection Report, OFSTED, 1997)

Educational standards achieved

- *Low attainment and poor progress;*

By the end of key stage 1 standards are below those expected for seven year olds in all subjects of the National Curriculum. By the end of key stage 2 standards are well below those expected of eleven year olds in all subjects of the National Curriculum and RE.

- *High levels of exclusions;*

During the last academic year there was an extremely high exclusion rate, 66 fixed-term exclusions compared to an average of 0.049 in primary schools nationally.

- *Poor attendance;*

Levels of attendance are well below the national average.

Quality of education provided

- *Unsatisfactory teaching;*

In just over half of the lessons seen teaching was satisfactory or better. In four out of ten lessons it was unsatisfactory and of these one in ten was poor or very poor.

- *Failure to implement the National curriculum;*

The IT taught does not cover the required programmes of study.

- *Very poor provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;*

Provision for moral and cultural development is unsatisfactory and provision for spiritual development is particularly weak.

The management of efficiency of the school

- *High levels of staff turnover or absence;*

There has been a very high turnover of staff recently as well as an unacceptably high number of supply teachers in the current school year. Currently three full time equivalent posts are filled by supply or temporary teachers.

- *Poor management and inefficient use made of the resources;*

Not all staff make effective use of resources. Unused rooms mean that the building is not used efficiently.

- *Poor value for money provided by the school.*

The unit cost per pupil is very high compared to primary schools nationally and therefore, overall, this school gives poor value for money.

The Effect Upon the School

During the years prior to and following the inspection the school suffered a 25% drop in pupils on roll. The parents who moved their children were those most able to understand and react to the situation, the majority of families could not afford to move or to transport their children to other schools. The resulting drop in income for the school, alongside increasing repair bills for a dilapidated building and constant vandalism, ensured that new resources could not be bought. Some staff left the school and were replaced with less expensive, inexperienced staff who found it difficult to cope with the situation in the school.

This then in turn led to more difficulties and a higher turnover of staff. Within the community of Northtown school the effect of the OFSTED report was evident. Whereas when the teacher population was consistent some school/parent interaction took place this became less as new staff worked at the school. The new staff and supply teachers did not have the knowledge about family backgrounds and difficulties that they were facing that could have created understanding and empathy. The staff began to see themselves as 'second class' teachers and told me of the, perceived, looks of disdain on other teachers faces when they said where they taught.

Chapter 6 Methodology

The Conceptual Paradigm of the Research Model

John Elliott summarizes educational action research as follows,

- '-it is directed towards the realization of an educational ideal;
- it focuses on changing practice to make it more consistent with the ideal;
- it gathers evidence of the extent to which the practice is consistent/inconsistent with the ideal and seeks explanations...;
- it problematizes some of the tacit theories which underpin and shape practice;
- it involves practitioners in generating and testing action-hypotheses about how to effect worthwhile educational change.' (Elliott, 1997 p. 25)

This view of action research as a 'bottom-up' process whereby practitioners can bring about change is questionably at odds with a political agenda that seeks to impose change and measure that change and improvement against national targets and statistical neighbours. It is however supported by the push towards self-evaluation whereby teachers monitor their own interactions with the pupils and reflect upon them, searching for ways to bring about change in real life settings, i.e. within their own classrooms and schools. How much this process of self-evaluation and reflective practice can be viewed as 'research' is open to debate.

Schon (1983) is clear about the nature of education, unlike some other research situations the problems are not always clear, saying,

‘The solutions of practice are not problems to be solved but problematic situations characterized by uncertainty, disorder, and indeterminacy’ p15-16

Schon takes the view that rather than beginning with the theory of educational practice one must be a ‘reflective practitioner’ and take practice as a basis for theory. Hart (1996) reiterates this view, suggesting that the reflection upon practice carried out in participant action research is an intensive version of that which is carried out by good teachers every day as they react to daily classroom interactions. Hart puts forward the case that it is this extension of practice that validates claims of transference into the classroom of research findings. Bassey (1992) views educational research as all enquiries that are conducted systematically and critically, suggesting that educational researchers are either setting out to understand some aspect or setting out to change some aspect of education. My study falls into the second category, and thus can be viewed as action research, as by following enquiry to understand the present situation the study attempts to induce change, change which I set out to suggest is beneficial.

I view the research process as a basis for professional development alongside that of creating change and analysing that procedure. Whether such change within a classroom can have wider implications is open to question, Noffe and Brennan (1997) suggest that it does. They suggest that socially devalued teachers may gain strength from work that focuses on children and which raises their awareness of the complex issues involved. They see action research as a way of, whilst probably not bringing about major innovative changes, at least raising issues onto the political agenda.

Action research does not just provide information about the change but also about the process of change. I think that this is particularly important in the field of education, as ‘teaching’ itself is a process that cannot easily be measured or defined.

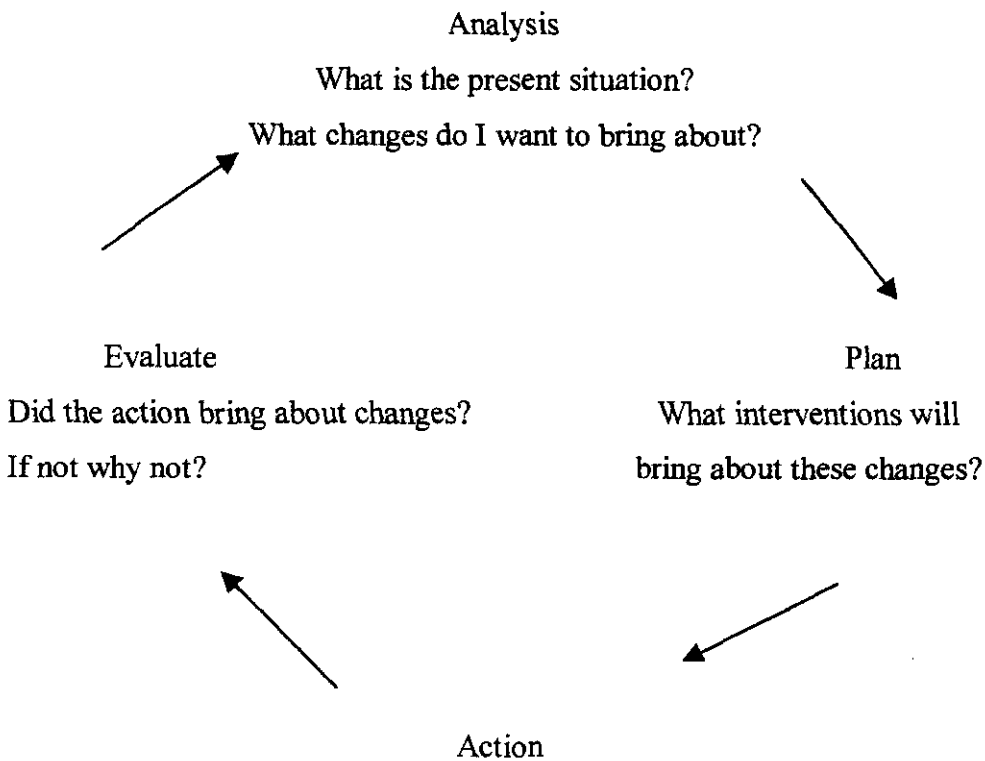
For Noffe (1997) there is a distinction between the 'educational knowledge' that is gained through action research and the knowledge that is gained through the actual process of bringing about change. It may be that whereas 'educational knowledge' brings about the researcher's view of educational improvement the second body of knowledge, gained by going through that process, brings about wider changes as it influences the 'researcher as teacher' and brings about changes in attitude, concept and need.

Stenhouse (1975) also supports this more process-based mode of action research. The need for teachers to continually reflect upon their own practice and evaluate it in terms of the ideal within the local situation is also a critical factor for Hammersley and Scarth (1993). There are great similarities between this view of action research and the type of problem solving that goes on in classrooms everyday by experienced teachers. It could be argued that because there is a need for local knowledge and understanding of ones own practice (Kemmis, 1993), action research can only be carried out successfully by participants. When conducting her own research Hart (1994) concluded that the analysis she made, striving for different interpretations of the data, ought to be addressed in principle in the context of everyday teaching (because of the important questions which they open up) but accepted nevertheless that this is not realistic in the midst of practice.

Action Research

The Action Research Model

The Action Research Model is essentially a cyclic one that brings about change. It relies upon an analysis of an initial situation, one that has a rationale for change behind it. Following this analysis some intervention must be designed that will bring about change in the required direction. My study is a participant one in that I am the one carrying out the intervention. The 'action' or intervention is evaluated following its implementation in order to appraise its success in bringing about the change sought. The cyclic nature of the model is that this phase is repeated any number of times, beginning each time with an analysis of the situation.



Action Research Bringing About Change

Any action research is designed to bring about change. There is a question to be asked as to whether this change is for the better, for who decides upon the direction this change takes?

One factor that must be considered in the action research model is the political impetus and directional push. When setting out to bring about some change I am being led towards what is considered desirable within the Government's agenda. Action research within a school does by necessity have its limitations and a small study cannot bring about political change. Rather than try to bring about change in the curriculum the study is an attempt to evaluate the NLS Framework for Teaching as an effective model for teaching literacy within an inclusive classroom. I will therefore set about creating change to classroom practice that will, hopefully, bring about improvement in pupils' learning experiences and ensuring that the literacy classroom meets the needs of every child.

As a researcher and as an LEA literacy consultant it is necessary to begin my study from a particular stance. I am suggesting that all pupils have the right of access to the National Curriculum and that schools should ensure that their pupils access all aspects of the NC alongside their peers. I am therefore suggesting that inclusivity, i.e. education alongside and with their peers, and access to the NC is a 'good' thing to achieve, as I have argued in Chapter 4.

Participant Action Research

Research is about enquiry and yet Kincheloe (1991) suggests that many studies of education do not first construct a system of meaning on which to ground the analysis of the research. Hart (1994) took this to mean that an attempt must be made to clarify the 'system of meaning' from within which the questions in the study are to be addressed, thus creating...

'the particular theoretical and ideological stance that underpins the study and gives shape to the questions and guides its interpretations.'

This need that Kincheloe identifies, for researchers to locate themselves within the social reality that they seek to investigate, I felt was particularly important if I was to be able to analyse my data in any meaningful and objective way. Indeed to do otherwise would place the study in danger of placing any difficulties that arose implementing the NLS firmly onto the pupils.

The debate about how far children's difficulties in learning should be seen as a within child problem and how far they are a product of the form of schooling has been around for many years. Dyson (1997) suggests that their difficulties are rooted in a class structure whereby working-class children are placed in the middle-class value structure of a school and their attributes devalued as a 'deficit' model. Whilst I am unsure whether I wholeheartedly agree that this is the only explanation, as disaffected youngsters do not only come from working-class backgrounds, I do feel that it is at the interface between pupil and the classroom activity that disaffection occurs.

Bearing in mind that my study took place in a school in Special Measures, and ran parallel with my professional role as a representative of the LEA giving support to such schools, of paramount importance was the need to reduce the disaffection and ensure effective literacy development for all, including those pupils causing concern. Through an action research model I would be able to focus upon the complexities of why the particular group of pupils is disaffected in the literacy classroom and concluded that the study could only be successfully completed through a cyclic process at that interface.

My analysis of the data I collected draws much from Hart's work. In her thesis (1994) she suggests that her framework arose because of the problems and uncertainties she encountered when trying to make sense of her data.

Some difficulties that came about because of her research role, Hart felt that the teacher's role is very different in that they have a greater knowledge of the children and are therefore in a better position to interpret the actions and response of the pupils. My position was similar, in that I came to the research role as an outsider not knowing the children, but brought with it an added difficulty. Alongside my research role was that of my professional role within the school both as a peripatetic teacher and as a representative of the LEA.

Any educational research must also be aware of the micro-politics of both the school and the wider context. Ball (1987) and Lovey (1995) both discuss the hierarchy within schools and Ball suggests that any research must consider the researcher position within that structure. Likewise investigation surrounding an LEA may cause friction within it, not least in terms of reporting findings (Walford, 1991). Whereas my role of monitoring and advising on behalf of the LEA placed me in a position of some standing within the school Lovey's conclusions about the status of peripatetic teachers placed me much lower down the hierarchy. Any suggestion of change to current practice can present a challenge for the class teacher.

If the changes bring about an improvement to the situation that existed the class teachers may conclude that they themselves were 'doing something wrong'. Class teachers sometimes therefore have a vested interest in the peripatetic teacher's failure to bring about improvement; this then places the 'fault' firmly upon the pupils rather than their own practice. I was helped somewhat by the fact that the NLS was a relatively new curriculum initiative and this possibly meant that class teachers were more open to my input than they might otherwise have being.

Objectivity and Participant Research

Objectivity is always a consideration in research and there is a danger that by choosing to investigate an area I am closely involved in I will see it only from my perspective.

All knowledge is constructed within a social culture however and one argument for participant research is that, whilst we can never be absolutely certain as to the truth of anything, any knowledge will be relevant to the setting. In looking at my findings it was therefore important that I drew upon the work of Faithorn (1992) and Hart (1994) to analyse my data from multiple perspectives. Although I will attempt to be unbiased Eisner (1993) suggests that this is impossible and one must instead recognize ones objectivity. It may be that there is a chance that in my observations or discussions I subconsciously dismiss those perceptions that challenge my view.

Eisner writes of objectivity as,

‘...a condition through which the world can be accurately seen, described, and interpreted.’

He goes on to suggest that whilst no one can be completely objective it is something that we must all strive towards when carrying out research. Phillips (1993) agrees with this, but reminds us that merely being objective does not necessarily ensure that we have discovered the truth. One of the difficulties of researching alongside participating is that one does have the preconceived ideas and prior knowledge that makes objectivity difficult (Hammersley and Scarth, 1993). Conversely though one could argue that educational research involves a social situation and should only be undertaken by a participant who truly understands it.

The long-term experiences that participants have can be said to give a deeper understanding of the situation than others. The participant researcher can use the relationships they have already built to collect data and as a participator they may be in the best position to test out any ideas. Critics of this approach suggest that participant researchers may have an interest in self-deception and may focus their research in a narrow context as they are unable to see the wider picture.

It may also be that the researchers' previous knowledge and relationships distorts their view of the situation (Hammersley, 1993).

Support for Vygotsky's theories is a central theme of this thesis and the work of Wells (1999) helped me to relate these theories to the constructivist nature of my study, although the work took place in Canada the pupils had many similar traits to those in my study. Wells puts the effectiveness of the intervention down to continually scrutinising ones own language and actions to ensure one can respond to each child's understanding. Thus each pupil is working within their Zone of Proximal Development as they construct their own understanding through the interactions within the lesson.

Watson (2001) describes how social constructivism through changes in the practice of teachers can be effective. In particular I was interested to read how raising teacher expectations can lead to those children who are having difficulties with learning becoming more autonomous. I hold the view that although speaking and listening objectives are not specifically outlined within the NLS they underpin what literacy is about and therefore should be built into any Literacy Hour. It was imperative therefore that my literacy lessons contained the kind of discussions that would enable children to conceptualise new understanding.

The Study

Action Research

The action research cycle will initially analyse the needs of a particular group of pupils, in terms of those things that are preventing an inclusive education alongside the demands and constraints of the National Literacy Strategy framework document (DfEE, 1998). This analysis of need will lead me to develop an intervention that I will then put in place. A discussion of the effectiveness of this intervention will lead to a further needs analysis on the small group and further cycles of intervention, evaluation, needs analysis, in this way the research will be responsive and constantly changing.

Constraints of the Study

Increasingly over the years since the introduction of the National Curriculum in England and Wales (QCA, 1999) schools have become constrained in the subject matter they have to teach. OFSTED inspections (OFSTED, 1999b) have denounced schools that do not follow the set programmes of study. With the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy there is even less room for variety or innovation in the curriculum. Supporters of the Literacy Strategy would argue that whilst the subject content is prescribed within the English programmes of study there is considerable freedom in the way this is taught and the strategy is a just a suggested way it can be implemented. However for a school such as the one my study takes place in, one that had been assessed as 'failing' by OFSTED, and indeed for many other schools, gathering evidence to support their scheme of work as at least as effective as the NLS is daunting. My action research takes the stance that the school in question is required to teach the programme of study outlined in the National Curriculum and has stated that they will do this as part of their development plan submitted to the DfEE.

The study is an attempt to evaluate the NLS as a possible effective model through which to teach literacy and the changes I will attempt to implement are designed to create inclusive literacy education within the NLS framework of the Literacy Hour.

The Pedagogic Framework

Swann et al (1982) writes of the difficulties in separating the traditional view of a behaviourist approach from the practice class teachers employ every day, suggesting that the major differences lie in the psychologist's tendency to quantify and record against the basic instinct of what works on the part of the class teacher. Setting out, as I was, to work within a class containing some pupils whose behaviour was a cause for concern for the school there are many models of behaviour modification programmes that I could have employed Swann warns of the dangers of this, reminding us that,

‘...for disruptive and difficult children, behavioural techniques do not offer, in principle or in practice, a solution to their problems.’ O.U. E241 12, p. 30

Rather than quantify and attempt to change the behaviour I wanted to try to understand the problems within the school from different perspectives in order to see how the classroom could become a more positive place for everybody. It could be argued that my positivist approach drew much from a behaviourist framework in its intrinsic rewards of attention and praise but I feel that it is part of the framework within which I, as a teacher in an inclusive classroom, must operate. The emphasis on language and social participation within the collective learning structure of a circle time environment places my study towards the constructivist curricula.

By removing the fear of failure by taking out the secretarial aspects of literacy and focusing upon what the group could do, i.e. oral work, I hoped to develop a 'class learning' identity and gain an insight into why the group were not conforming to school expectations rather than place the 'blame' upon the children themselves.

Circle Time

In many countries: America, Italy, Scandinavia and Holland, there are clear methodologies for the introduction and content of circle time programmes based upon psychological and pedagogic theories. The programmes are progressive and have specific outcomes surrounding the development of self-awareness, confidence and social interaction (Klein, 1999). Klein does go on to suggest however that no such theories underpin the British version where circle time, she says, is more about behaviour management than developing children's communication skills. Indeed some schools have developed behaviour modification programmes based solely around the circle time concept (Draper, 2000, Dixon, 1996). My decision to use circle time was partly because of its approach that enabling me to develop class rules, an approach that I hoped would lead to a positive classroom environment. Studies of such approaches are numerous, and referenced and reported by Hardman and Smith (1999), but I also held a belief that circle time would be an effective way to develop speech and language skills and social interaction. Vygotsky's view of learning as a non-linear sequence relies upon individuals internalising concepts through self-discovery,

'...learning higher forms of mental activity via more knowledgeable peers and adults who jointly construct and transfer this activity primarily through language.'
(Jaramillo, 1996, p.134)

The development of spoken language is somewhat neglected within the NLS (Cassidy, 1999) and yet Vygotsky sees it as an essential tool to share social meanings amongst others.

An approach that begins with language at a concrete level before moving to the abstract notion such as emotions was required if the pupils were to develop empathy with others in the school. The study used a circle time approach as that ensured pupils were able to use language as a cultural tool in conceptualising new ideas and benefit from the understanding of others in the class.

Instruments and Methods Used

Description of Instruments

- *Observations*

Initial observations were recorded following a schedule. The schedule was designed to follow a similar layout to that used within the LEA and had been jointly agreed upon by schools and officers. Some additions were made to accommodate the NLS following discussions with other members of the literacy team. I completed the schedule whilst sitting in classes and began by detailing the make up and layout of the classroom, noting resources and displays. It was used to note the format of the lesson, with timings where possible, teaching points and activities as they arose. As soon as possible after completing each schedule I met with the class teacher to verify my record, to ascertain their opinion of the lesson and to discuss any points that arose. The purpose of these initial observations was to develop the foci of the research and these schedules were therefore shared with the head teacher.

At other times a timed sequential observation took place whereby the behaviours of the group of four children were recorded (see Appendix 1 for examples of these). I completed the schedule whilst sitting in on the class in question. I recorded the behaviour, speech, interaction and activities of each child in rotation. Thus I observed and recorded my observations of each child approximately every two minutes, these were invaluable in highlighting not only the sorts of behaviours that were causing the school concern but also their frequency. Once the structure of the research was in place field notes were used and these later became the greater part of my record keeping.

- *Field Notes*

Detailed notes were taken during my observations of the class (extracts from which can be seen in Appendix 2). These included particular reference to the four children who were the foci of the study.

Their behaviours and interactions with other people within the room were noted. When the research moved into participant action I recorded my observations and thoughts as soon as possible after the lesson had finished and discussed them with the class teacher during the next available break time in order to validate my reflections. At this time I could only record a small selection of incidents and therefore focused upon those involving the pupils in the group that particularly surrounded either the success of or barrier to the implementation of the NLS.

- *Interviews and Discussions*

Structured interviews took place with line managers, senior management of the school and the class teacher to ensure informed permission was given for the research to take place. Discussions with the head teacher took place on a regular basis, firstly to decide upon the focus for my interaction and later to keep her informed of progress (see Appendix 4). A semi-structured interview with the class teacher was used to inform my decision about the choice of pupils for the study. Later discussions were held to keep her informed as to the procedures and strategies I was using and as a check on the validity of my recollections. My field note, extracts of which can be seen in Appendix 2, were used here as a starting point for discussions (extracts from the record of these are in Appendix 4).

- *Other Data*

-The school had a written record of playtime and lunchtime detentions which I scrutinised.

-Minutes of staff meetings (Appendix 3).

Analysis of the Data

Participating in ones own research brings about certain difficulties when it comes to analysing the data gathered. Faithorn (1992) describes it as the challenge of holding,

‘...different cultural realities simultaneously and then integrating these multiple perspectives in order to take effective action.’ p23

Faithorn goes on to describe three perspectives that she terms; cultural, intercultural and transcultural. The first she uses to describe ones own cultural conditioning, accepting that the researcher can never completely negate this and warning that one must always be aware of personal bias. The second way of knowing that Faithorn describes, the intercultural way, she suggests underpins the participant observer research role. In this one tries to view and understand the situation through the, in my case, pupils’ eyes. The transcultural perspective recognises that although we are culturally diverse we nevertheless have shared experiences and are united by them.

The framework that Faithorn presents here was further enlightened for me when I read Hart’s 1994 account of her research. The same quest to analyse findings through the use of multiple perspectives was described, this time through the terminology of four modes of analysis.

Inter-connective mode

This mode Hart described as a negative interpretation, accepting the perceptions of the child’s response as problematic although interpreting this not as a within child problem but rather as a legitimate response to the learning environment. In terms of my own research this meant accepting that the groups responses were problematic for the school and investigating what might be bringing about these responses to the classroom interface.

Oppositional mode

We all bring to our research our own interpretations and judgements about what we observe. Hart suggests that we need to make these explicit, justifying and challenging the norms and assumptions implicit within these and asking ourselves to challenge the grounds on which we interpret the situation, questioning how else the situation might be interpreted.

I have stated that my study should take place at the point where I believed the difficulties were occurring, the classroom interface, and interpreting events from an oppositional mode begs the question whether my 'middle-class' expectations as a teacher were conflicting with the legitimate behaviours of a 'working-class' child?

Decentred mode

The decentred mode encourages us to challenge our own perspectives by trying to make sense of the same situation from the child's point of view. In terms of the research this meant that although I viewed the calling out or refusing to join in shared reading as problematic I needed to consider the lessons from the pupils' viewpoint.

Hypothetical mode

I am rather intrigued by Hart's hypothetical mode. Here she invites us to suspend judgement and develop our interpretive resources in some way before trying to make an interpretation of the child's response. Rather suggesting that there may exist an acceptable interpretation of the group's behaviour but I do not yet have the necessary knowledge or skills to make sense of it.

The function of these different modes is to open up different features of the interpretive context to scrutiny, and so avoid displacing responsibility onto the child. Hart suggests that it is constructive and potentially empowering, since the opening-up process generates new insights and lines of enquiry to pursue in response to children whose learning concerns us. I was at pains to avoid any claims that my study was purely behaviourist in approach and Hart's framework would allow me to focus upon the different perspectives of my findings, placing change at the classroom interface firmly above any change of pupil behaviour.

I could see how the modes that Hart described were an extension of the work of the experienced practitioner in the classroom.

Experienced teachers use the inter-connective mode when things are not going well as they change their teaching and content according to the responses they are receiving. The oppositional mode is sometimes more difficult but teachers do try to pursue more than one interpretation of a situation and, Hart suggests, hold a desire, for instance, to give a particular child the benefit of the doubt. The decentred mode would appear to correspond to what is meant by genuinely child centred teaching, whereas when working with a new class many teachers would employ the hypothetical mode. Thus it is clear that a parallel can legitimately be drawn between the methodological problems arising in the research and the interpretive processes of teaching, and therefore that the findings derived from the experience of the research have a necessary contribution to make to the inclusive literacy classroom.

Transparency, Validity and Transference

Triangulation of Evidence

Elliott (1991) has put forward a process of validating data known as 'triangulation of evidence'. This method involves the comparison of data from a number of sources in an attempt to increase the assumption that the data reported upon is valid. In this study the validity of data is a crucial issue, as in any participant research, and I attempted to use other sources of data to analyse alongside my own observations. All my field notes and other jottings were checked against the observations and thoughts of others in the school, mainly the class teacher and the head teacher. Very little hard data existed against which to check my findings but where it did exist, such as the records of playtime and lunchtime detentions or the teachers' planning, this was scrutinised.

Ethics of the Research

Whenever and wherever any research is undertaken there are ethical issues that must be considered. Throughout my research I have observed protocol by ensuring that my line managers and the class teacher and senior management of the school had given informed permission and approval for my study. I have sought to involve the personnel of the school as the work went along and agreed the form that my interventions would take at each stage of the study. In my professional role I have authorisation to observe within the school and the head teacher and class teachers agreed that I could report upon these in my research. Following the recording of any observation I shared it with the class teachers and the head teacher in order that my notes were checked for fairness and accuracy.

The name of the school and staff have been changed so as to protect identities.

Chapter 7 Background to the Study

The Chosen School

Social and Economical Area

The school I have chosen, which I will call Northtown, is on the edge of the LEA and within a number of large sprawling council estates that have, over the years, merged together. 63% of the pupils attending the school receive free school meals and of the nearly one hundred primary schools within the authority only one has a higher percentage than this. This other school has 67% on free school meals and is the nearest school being on the same housing estate, pupil movement tends to be just between the two schools. The catchment area of Northtown School has the characteristics of social deprivation. There are high levels of unemployment within the area and only about a third of the children wear the school uniforms. Children are often inadequately dressed and around half do not have appropriate warm coats or shoes. Drugs are a major problem within the community and at any one time there are several parents in prison for drug related offences. Some parents collecting children at the end of the day are thought to be intoxicated and on one occasion one father was observed injecting drugs on the school premises. The school, and the surrounding area, suffers from repeated vandalism and petty crime. Within the school building graffiti is evident and there is an air of neglect and drabness.

The school had being a cause for concern for several years, management and leadership were deemed inadequate by the LEA due to mismanagement of resources and their deployment. After almost a year off school due to illness the head teacher resigned but by then the school was deemed to be failing and placed in Special Measures following an OFSTED inspection in June 1997.

Northtown School, the focus for my study, reflects the society within which it lies. Whereas the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) moved the concept from 'handicapped children' to 'children with special educational needs' it did not take account of the socially disadvantaged background that some children come from (Mittler, 1999). Studies in the early seventies, and more recent ones, looking at the Standard Attainment Tests undertaken by all children in England and Wales (Sharrocks, 1993) have analysed performance against social background and shown links though it is unclear what reasons lie behind this. OFSTED reported that in areas of social and economic disadvantage they studied the schools did not meet the needs of the children, demonstrating early underachievement, insufficient challenge to raise attainment and teachers with low expectations of the children.

Staffing Problems

Due to the circumstances the school found itself in, and it must be said as a contributing factor to the circumstances, there were ongoing staffing problems.

- Just before the school's move into Special Measures the head teacher, the deputy and the SENCO had resigned.

- An acting head teacher was appointed but only stopped for a couple of months.

- A new deputy was appointed but resigned before taking up the post.

- A new acting head teacher was appointed who worked for two terms in the school but then felt that she wanted to move on.

- In September 1998 another acting head teacher had been appointed but resigned after six weeks due to ill health.

- The previous SENCO had been brought back on to the staff as deputy head.

- An associate head teacher post had been created as a two-term secondment from another school.

- A reception teacher had been seconded from another school.

- Two temporary teachers had their contracts extended for a further two terms.

- Due to increased pupil numbers, a further two teachers were appointed.

The school had suffered from falling rolls but a sudden influx of children in September led to two reception classes being run and an extra appointment in year 4/5. This led to 50% of the children in the school in either reception or Y3, when many of the Year 3 children already on the special needs register.

A new acting head teacher, Carol, was brought in from a successful school within the authority on a two-term secondment. Within days Carol realised the crisis the school was in and as a proviso of her continuing in the role requested additional support from myself as the literacy consultant and additional support from the Assessment and Learning Support Service plus the temporary exclusion of a number of children. At this time only four members of the existing staff were on permanent contracts, three were on short-term secondments, three were part time and three were on short-term contracts. The more experienced staff were also heavily weighted towards Key Stage One with only one member of the full time staff in Key Stage Two having worked in the school before, and that on a one term temporary contract.

The 'Unit'

Here around eight pupils who were in danger of being excluded because of their behaviour worked with a teacher, a support assistant and an Education Welfare Officer who also visited their homes to discuss progress and concerns on a twice weekly basis. Pupils in the 'unit' were completely segregated from the rest of the school during the day and followed a restricted curriculum and a different reward and sanctions policy. The emphasis was placed on basic literacy and numeracy and rewards took the form of trips out, food, drinks, computer time, praise, stickers and, later in the term, time back in mainstream classrooms.

The Threat of Closure

The threat of closure hung heavily over the school and it was proving almost impossible to get supply teachers in to cover for staff training or absentees.

When schools are placed in Special Measures following an inspection they are given a two-year period in which to recover. At the end of this time, if they have not previously been removed from the category, schools that on re-inspection have not made sufficient progress can be given a 'Fresh Start' or indeed closed using the Secretary of State's powers. Northtown School was heading towards the end of its two-year period without a permanent senior management structure in place and with negative reports from its interim HMI monitoring visits. In addition teacher absenteeism was increasing, running at an average of over 90 days a term over the seven classes, this was alongside the increased INSET provision that being an intensive literacy support school was to bring. During the previous two terms 24 different supply teachers had worked in the school, two of who had left half way through the day and many who refused to return for subsequent supply work. There were no regular supply teachers who knew the children or the school.

Impact Upon the School

The consequences of the OFSTED report were that all staff were uncertain about their continued employment. The majority of classes were taught by teachers unused to the school and who had little knowledge about the policies and practices or indeed the individual children. This led to inconsistency of approach throughout the school, which in turn unsettled the children. I observed confusion about the simplest routines, such as how teachers knew whether it was an indoor playtime or not, and insufficient knowledge about available resources to be able to teach efficiently. Several times I saw teachers using big books for shared reading sessions that were inappropriate for their particular teaching objective whilst suitable material existed in other classrooms.

Some of the teachers were spending a great deal of time making their own resources for their groups to use when the two teachers running withdrawal groups had considerable quantities of commercially produced material that could be used.

Whilst a behavioural policy existed it was not put into practice consistently. It appeared to be up to the individual teacher to decide what behaviour warranted what action and because of this uncertainty there was a constant stream of pupils being sent to the deputy or head teacher. On one occasion I was sent a child who held out piece of work and said, "Miss says I have to show you this." Just like the senior management must have felt I was then unsure what I should say, was this a particular good piece of work for this child that I should praise profusely or had they not produced the quantity or quality they should have done? Above all children view fairness and consistency as paramount to being a good teacher and this was clearly not happening within Northtown School. As yet another newcomer to the school I was frequently asked by the children if I would be coming back the following week such was their insecurity.

Why I Chose the School for my Study

I chose Northtown School as the focus for my research for a number of reasons. As a school already identified as 'failing' in many aspects including literacy there was no question as to whether the NLS should be implemented in its entirety. The school was one I had not worked in before and therefore I was able to go in without pre-conceived notions about the staff or their teaching. (I felt that as there had been so many changes to staff since the inspection any judgements I had read were irrelevant, especially as changes in allocations to classes and new staff meant that I was unable to identify teachers referred to in the inspection report). Alongside the school's under-achievements in literacy generally they had a large number of pupils identified as having Special Educational Needs, 38% of the pupils were on the SEN register with 6% having a statement of SEN. I wanted my study to address an area of concern rather than focus just on literacy so this was also relevant to my choice.

As a school in 'Special Measures' it was one that professionally I would be spending time in and this enabled me to complete some of the background to my study in a time effective way, additionally during my early work in the school I felt there was a particular need that I could address within the time limit of the study. I am committed to promoting inclusive education wherever practicable and possible and saw that for a substantial minority of children at the school this was not happening. It disturbed me to see groups of pupils excluded from either the tasks or sometimes the classrooms and for whom special educational needs were not being met. Whilst action research within a short study such as mine can have only a limited impact I felt that I could make a difference to these children's educational experiences. I also felt from my initial meetings with the teaching staff that the school was open about the difficulties they were having and enthusiastic and welcoming to anyone who could both empathize with them and was willing to give them some constructive help and support.

Chapter 8 The Study

This chapter documenting the study is in three parts. I begin by reporting how the focus for the study evolved and the initial analysis that led me towards this. The next section attempts to pull together succinctly the cycles of action research that took place over some months and that had as an objective the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. In the latter part of the chapter I present an overview of my analysis attempting to map the needs of the individual children with that of the implementation of the literacy hour for the class as a whole. The study looks at the actions I took in order to implement the whole class shared aspects of the hour. A series of steps along this path will form the study and an action research model best describes these cycles of intervention which took place during the Autumn Term 1998 and the Spring Term 1999.

Part One

My role within the school

In my role as a Literacy Consultant I had to support the school in its development of literacy and in particular its implementation of the National Literacy Strategy including the daily literacy hour. The study was therefore designed to be one that would bring about change. With my professional role within the school the direction that change would be towards was largely set, the implementation of the daily literacy hour. Any move towards the literacy hour must be seen within the context of the school, i.e. one in special measures, and must support the inclusive literacy education of all youngsters within the class including those pupils exhibiting challenging behaviours who are already highlighted as a cause for concern by the school. The study is therefore not about an analysis of any status quo or testing out hypotheses but one that will move the situation within the location in a particular direction.

Aims and constraints of the study

The school has planned for a gradual introduction of the 'daily literacy hour' over the course of the Autumn term. There had been a history of pupils within the class excluded from the curriculum, either for behavioural reasons or because of difficulties in accessing the activity. The previous inspection had reported that the activities that such pupils were asked to do were not challenging and were often not completed. My initial analysis of the classroom, which is detailed later in this chapter, suggested to me that a particular ethos was in place whereby if you were not expected to do the work the others were doing you could often do nothing or choose your own activity. My study attempted to change this attitude by creating the expectation that all pupils would be expected to complete the activities. The study falls short of implementing the independent work, as described by the National Literacy Strategy, and looked at providing access to whole class work.

The study took place within a school that had been placed in 'Special Measure' this, alongside my professional role within the LEA, meant that major innovative curriculum changes were not a possibility. The revisit by OFSTED was to the forefront of the minds of most staff within the school and I was therefore mindful of the criteria by which the inspectors would be judging the teaching and learning within the Literacy Strategy.

The 'Unit', as described previously, had been set up as an LEA initiative and I felt that this had considerable impact upon my study.

Introduction to the Study

It was clear from my earliest thoughts on the nature of this thesis that in order to consider the NLS in terms of an inclusive classroom I would need to focus my study at the classroom level. I wanted to ensure that whatever framework for an inclusive literacy classroom the research put forward it is based upon what is possible, manageable and has been shown to work in a practical situation. The NLS framework document outlines teaching objectives that should be covered. The national training materials that accompanied this suggests some ways in which these objectives can be taught but the video snippets each last for only a few minutes. Watching the videos, alongside many of the teachers from the LEA, they were criticised for giving the viewer no sense of how a complete section of the literacy hour developed or how it could be taught when ones class did not all sit as attentively as those on the video sequences.

The Additional Guidance given for literacy hour and the child with special educational needs refers to additional adults in the classroom and their use. My study does not focus upon children who receive extra support but rather upon those who are not but are nevertheless causing concern to the teacher because they are seen as a barrier to the introduction of the NLS, particularly where the NLS calls for whole class teaching. As an 'outsider' coming to do a participant research study there are many difficulties in the collection and analysis of data. The barriers to the implementation of the NLS in the classroom that I perceived may be very different to those seen by the school, the teachers or the pupils. It was therefore very important that I triangulated my observations with other evidence obtained from personnel within the school. When analysing the data I will attempt to do so from a number of viewpoints as suggested by Susan Hart (1996) and as I describe in Chapter 6. The situations that exist in the literacy classrooms in a school such as Northtown are many faceted and one of the challenges for me is to interpret it both from my own experiences and context and from that of others.

My aim is not to put forward evidence that supports one explanation of one true picture but rather to produce an action research study that encompasses all and moves the literacy classroom forward in directions that satisfy the aims of the NLS and the school itself. If the closing stages of the study is a sequence of literacy hours in which all pupils participate in whole class literacy activities and tasks this initial stage must highlight that which is preventing such lessons. By documenting the situation at present, and pulling out those things in the classroom that appear to be hindering the implementation of the NLS for analysis, I hope to be able to design interventions that will move towards a more inclusive literacy classroom,

The Action Research

The first cycle of the action research analyses the situation within the school in order to decide upon the particular focus of the study. It was clear to me that because of time constraints the study would need to be designed to ensure that I was able to fulfil my professional role within the school alongside the collection of any data. The following section describes the situation, as I saw it, during my initial visits and documents the analysis that led me to the main focus of the study.

Initial analysis of need

My initial three visits to the school were concerned with meeting the staff, finding my way around the school and planning with them an in-service training timetable that I would be carrying out. I was surprised to discover how little time the teachers had worked together, I had heard about the staffing changes but had expected a much larger school and did not realise that only four teachers had taught there continuously over the last year. The schools deemed to be intensive support ones, such as Northtown, had all been funded to send two teachers on a five-day training course designed to cover the National training surrounding the literacy strategy and with the expectation that these teachers would then lead some school based training for their colleagues. Unfortunately both teachers who had attended had since left the school and subsequently none of the available training material had been used as the staff were unaware of its existence. The INSET day allocated at the beginning of term for NLS training had been used by individual teachers to prepare their classrooms.

My first visit to the school was at the head teacher's request to attend a staff meeting and 'answer some of the questions' that he said teachers had about the NLS. The questions, as audio recorded in the staff meeting minutes (see appendix 3), fell into three broad topics; the structure of the literacy hour, their worries about its implementation in Northtown School and the amount of planning for each day they would have to do. The questions about the structure of the hour concentrated upon the carousel method of working whereby the class would be split into five groups and each group would be working on a different task related to the week's learning objectives. In turn this concerned the staff in terms of planning time as they said that they did not have a good range of textbooks or teaching materials and consequently were preparing worksheets for each group to use on a daily basis. Only two copies of the Framework for Teaching were available in the school and these had to be shared between the 13 teachers, consequently only the deputy and the associate head said that they had read it.

Whilst most of the teachers had read the draft documentation about the NLS they had not realised the significant changes that had since been made. They were all under the misconception that they had to work on a carousel basis over five groups in their class and were trying to plan 25 different activities just for the independent sessions contained in one week of lessons, (this way of working was outlined as the only model in the draft document). They were under the impression that they had to implement the full hour immediately and thought that every activity during the hour had to relate to the enlarged text used in the whole class shared reading. Consequently they said that it was taking them six to eight hours to plan for the week as they struggled to find phonic or sentence level work from the text for each group (see extract from the minutes of the meeting, Appendix 3, and pro-forma Appendix 6). The teachers planning that I looked at showed upwards of 30 activities for any book.

As I visited the school during those first weeks I became aware of some of the rationale behind the model the school was introducing. I was aware that as a Literacy Consultant I was bringing my own perceptions of the NLS and tried to view the situation from the school's point of view. As a school in 'special measures' Northtown was under continual close scrutiny. The staff were aware that they had to fulfil certain criteria if the next inspection was to be a positive one. One of the criteria by which they said that they felt they would be judged was the extent to which the NLS had been implemented within the school and, as the next visit by the lead inspector was only a few weeks away, they felt that their own literacy hours should therefore follow the strategy exactly, whether or not their own professional judgment suggested that this might be too big a leap to make immediately from their present situation. The following are comments made to me at this time.

"I don't really know what to do when she [the lead inspector] comes.

Do you think she'll mind if the S.A. takes that group out [indicating a group of four children] only you've seen what they're like. If Victoria starts playing up I'll not be able to read the book and then it'll all go to pot."

Sheila, year 3/4 teacher

"I'm going to do 'The Lady of Shalott' for the next few weeks, then we'll be into something for the inspection visit. I don't think they can all do the work from this book but I've got some letter sounds work from class 7 [a class where some SEN children are withdrawn to do such work]. Will it matter that the bottom group are doing that? I've sort of looked at the sounds, the rhymes that I'll ask the kids for and then that group can do work on those."

Duncan, year 5 teacher

"I've really only got four groups, they sort of split that way, is that alright?"

Alison, year 6 teacher

"It's alright them [the NLS] saying do one big book all week but they [the children] get fed up with it. We read it everyday then I've got all these worksheets to do, they're fed up by Thursday. But if that's what they say I've got to do... Trouble is they can't sit still so we spend the first half hour trying to get it read, these children can't do that you know. People that write this stuff [indicating the NLS framework] they just don't understand."

Ann, year 1/2 teacher

I suspect that for some of them at least the criticisms that had been made of them had led to them doubting their own abilities as teachers, whereas others maybe decided that the only way in which the school could get out of 'special measures' was to 'jump through the hoops' as was expected of them, and part of that was to implement all aspects of the NLS.

As the school's literacy consultant I attempted to convince them that we should introduce the NLS gradually and that future inspection visits would be looking at a planned introduction that took into account the needs of the school and the familiarity of the staff with the strategy. The staff were however not convinced that I was right in this and continued to plan and teach the full literacy hour. Alongside this I tried to suggest that the NLS could encompass a variety of different models of literacy hours and demonstrated how the same enlarged text could be used to meet a number of different learning objectives using a variety of teaching styles to suit a range of pupil groups. Looking back now I think that this was not the message that the teachers wanted to hear. Loss of confidence in their own judgment had possibly made them believe that there was only one correct way, and why wouldn't I just tell them that. 'What will OFSTED be looking for?' was a constant question. Here perhaps was the beginning of the conflicts that permutated through the study. The school wanted to do its best for the children in their care but what they felt that the pupils needed was possibly at odds with the direction the school was been pushed in by the inspection process. Conversely one could put forward the case that, as the school was judged to be providing poor standards of teaching and learning by OFSTED, the education that it was providing had to change in some way. Within any solution is the conflict between meeting the needs of the majority of children in the class and providing for the very individual needs that some pupils have.

During my initial observations in classrooms I made some notes (see Appendix 1) recording what I saw and heard at two-minute intervals throughout the shared part of the lessons.

At the end of the day I drew from these the occasions when the teacher and pupils were not reading, discussing or working in some way with the text or related issue. The following is taken from that note:

- noise levels were very high making it difficult for pupils to listen to any instructions or discussions,
- staff were shouting above the class noise level to gain attention in order to give instructions, i.e. 'listen to what you have to do next'
- two teachers were physically restraining pupils from attacking others,
- several children from each class were withdrawn at various times causing some minutes of disruption as they collected together equipment to take with them or returned to class and had to 'catch up' with what was happening,
- the shared reading session was disrupted as pupils were moved around to break up disputes or were spoken to for not joining in the reading,
- pupils were constantly having to be brought back on task, i.e. 'don't play with your shoe', 'look this way', 'stop talking', 'turn around so you can see the book', 'listen to what he has to say',
- there was no sustained pace, planned 15mins of reading took twice as long because of the disruptions.

At this time I felt quite despondent about the future of my study. I could understand why the teachers were concerned about the 30 minutes of whole class work at the beginning of each literacy hour and begun to wonder whether I would be able to create that structure myself. As a peripatetic teacher I had got used to putting my professional expertise 'on the line' in a number of situations. The class teacher is continually faced with the possibility that pupils are failing to make progress because they the teacher are not providing the curriculum content or context the child requires. The peripatetic teacher who then comes along and suggests teaching strategies that enable progress to be made is reinforcing the held assumption.

Not only was I going to present my ideas for teaching the literacy strategy to the staff but I was also committed to demonstrating them by teaching their classes. I began by analysing the above observations.

During any of my observations I am aware that I do so from my own experiences and context. I felt that the behaviour of the pupils I observed was unacceptable but on what grounds? Teachers have varying views on acceptable behaviour but an individual's right to learn must surely not be under threat. Where children were physically or verbally attacked, or where they felt threatened by others, this was not acceptable. Where the teaching was interrupted or noise levels were such that speakers could not be heard I felt it was unacceptable, my other comments are perhaps more subjective.

Many reports have stated that children learn best when they are a party to the learning outcomes. Edwards and Mercer (1994) write that,

Part of the problem for pupils is that much of the process remains mysterious to them... They are frequently asked to do things, learn things, understand things, for no apparent reason other than that it is what the teacher wants them to do. The goals and purposes of the lesson are not revealed.

p.201

They go on to cite Vygotsky (1962) and Bruner (1990) as theorists backing such a strategy. The review of the first year of the literacy strategy similarly puts forward the case for learning objectives to be made clear to the class at the beginning of the lesson and returned to during the plenary session. At Northtown School the teachers were planning many activities, all of which could have been focused towards a number of learning objectives. Without a clear focus the activities covered many different objectivities, none of which were sustained long enough for the class to fully understand, and often ended with a trivial activity that took up most of the lesson.

An example of this was in a year 3/4 class that had spent some time writing instructional text and had worked in groups to 'make up' their own board games and write out a set of instructions. This had gone very well, the teacher said, so she was now letting the children make boxes to store their games in. This took up a whole week of literacy lessons as for five hours children cut, stuck and coloured pieces of card with felt tip pens. A further illustration occurred in a year 4/5 class where the teacher began by explaining the use of the apostrophe in place of missing letters. After a few examples for the children to try she went on to possessive apostrophes and gave a few examples. The children then had to finish off some work on speech marks that involved placing them correctly within a given sentence and then draw a picture for a story they had written the previous week. Can either of these two examples be described as effective teaching? What explanations are possible for the observations I made? Were my observations typical of what was happening in the school and if so what other interpretations of the situations are there?

One possible explanation for the pupils' behaviours is that the children are responding in an appropriate way given their own experiences and the learning context in which they are placed. Watching the majority of the parents as they pick up their children after school one can observe the physical and verbal aggression between family members and between friends, yet this is also true of many of the surrounding school that also have similar socio-economical catchments areas. These other schools have some areas of concern but none have the same levels of difficulties that Northtown were experiencing. Moreover this deficit model on its own does not motivate school based action research where any outcomes have no influence on the child's home experiences. It does however give us some insight into the gulf that can exist between the child's prior experience and the learning context that operates in the school.

In order to assess whether my observations were of typical lessons I spoke to each of the teachers privately, showing them my field notes relating to their lesson, to ascertain their opinion on this. Rather than put forward any excuses the staff were very open about the lessons I had seen. All of them stated that they felt I had seen either a typical day or in some cases a 'better than usual' one because particular pupils were absent or withdrawn for that session. As they described incidents that had occurred in the past I began to realise that these teachers considered the behaviour of the children in the lessons I had observed to be an improvement on earlier in the term. This was an important discovery for me and led me to try to analyse my observations from the school's viewpoint.

A key factor in the behaviour of the pupils could be the way in which the school viewed it. If the teachers felt that behaviour had improved over the last few weeks might they be rewarding this new behaviour? Whereas I was seeing unacceptable behaviour it is possible that others saw improving behaviour. One of OFSTED criticisms of the teachers was that they accepted, and sometimes praised, work which was below standard. I would put forward the argument that the inspectors could not know each child and therefore would find it difficult to judge exactly what standard of work they could reasonably be expected to produce. Surely any child should be given some positive feedback if what they have produced is in any way an improvement on previous work, even if it is still below OFSTED's 'standard'. As behaviour was such an issue for the school it might be that the teachers were concentrating on this aspect and praising instances of 'on-task' or other 'looked for behaviour' rather than the standard of work. If this was the case then the feedback given would need to become more specific in order for children to understand what they had done well and prevent negative aspects being reinforced by any misinterpretation as to what the praise was for. It is important to reiterate here that because of the changes of staff the majority of them were unaware what the situation was in other classrooms and were working very much in isolation.

Designing the implementation

I felt that my study must in some way address the children's behaviours that I had observed as well as address their literacy attainment. Of paramount importance therefore was that as the action research cycle moved towards the implementation of the literacy strategy for all it must do so by creating an openly fair and consistent approach within the classroom and one that was sustainable within the school. With the time constraints of the study I already decided that the focus would be within one classroom. By focusing in particular upon a small group of children who were causing concern within this classroom I hoped to be able to analyse the lessons from their viewpoints as well as from that of the school's and my own. This would make my intervention more pertinent to the children's needs and enable the effectiveness of this intervention to be more readily analysed and evaluated.

Selection of the class and the group of pupils for the study

By this time within my study the acting head teacher had left due to ill health. The new acting head teacher, Carol, had already aired the need to target my work within the school and, having spent time in all classrooms prior to our meeting, we met to agree the details of my focus. We discussed my observations of each classroom and as the transcript of part of the meeting shows (Appendix 4) Carol's concerns surrounded a new to the school and relatively inexperienced teacher Liz. Carol herself had only been at the school for a short time but had made informal visits to each classroom to get a sense of the learning environment and the educational framework within which each teacher worked. Carol's experiences were similar to my observations of Liz's class, recorded on the LEA proforma, and together we drew up the following list of concerns surrounding her handling of and interactions with the pupils, namely;

- a number of children were off task for a large part of the lessons; some of the pupils had at other times left the classroom without seeking permission and wandered around the school,

- Liz was not dealing with some unacceptable behaviour, children were wandering around the classroom talking to others, shouting across the room and arguing over resources without Liz speaking to them,

- Liz was not presenting a consistent approach to the class. Whilst she was not challenging the behaviours noted above of some children. She later picked up on a similar incident when a child wandered over to another table and took a handful of coloured pencils, and excluded the child from the classroom,

- the pupils were not working independently when required to and off task behaviour was reinforced by attention from the class teacher or non-teaching assistant,

- the activities planned for the literacy lessons did not sufficiently challenge the pupils; around 50% of the lesson time was spent copying from worksheets or the board.

-Liz's planning showed that the objectives she had noted were taken from year 3 in the National Literacy Framework despite the fact that the pupils were the older end of the year 4 and some year 5 children,
-the class was not engaged in their learning, activities were taken from a textbook and the class was not told the objective of these activities.

The conclusion of the meeting was that Carol asked me to teach the literacy lessons in Liz's class myself where possible and agreed that I should use these lessons to carry out my research study, (she had already spoken to my line manager to arrange additional time for me to be in the school).

In order to construct a literacy classroom that would meet the needs of all pupils I chose to focus my attention on the needs of a small group who were already the main cause for concern within the class. I hoped that by analysing the difficulties that these pupils were experiencing, whether that be an individual 'within child' difficulty or arising as a conflict with the classroom environment and expectations (whilst at the same time working with the whole class) I would create a literacy classroom that would truly meet the needs of all pupils. Scrutinising my field notes there were four names that were frequently recorded as off task or hindering the lesson. My task was to create a learning environment that involved these four pupils with the expectation that if literacy lessons were such that they drew in these it could surely draw in the whole class. I verified whether these pupils were the ones exhibiting the most difficult behaviours using the comparison of data from a number of sources; a further observation of these particular pupils in the classroom, the head teacher's concerns following her observations and the interactions she had with the pupils throughout other parts of the school day, discussion with the class teacher and a record of playtime detentions.

The head teacher's comments;

- these pupils were amongst some who had been wandering around the school over the previous week, knocking on doors and shouting into other classrooms,
- out of lesson times she had spoken to members of the group individually for attacking, both physically and verbally, other pupils,
- there had been incidents at lunchtime when the four had refused to follow instructions from the lunchtime supervisors, pulling faces at them and disrupting the routines.

The class teacher's concerns;

- she voiced her concerns over her own classroom management. She said that she could not get the class to sit still and listen to what she was saying and didn't know what to do about them shouting out all the time,
- of the four only Gareth had not had several playtime detentions, been sent outside the classroom or sent to the head teacher,
- voiced doubts in her ability to teacher Nathan and James, finding them difficult to 'manage' and felt that they were not making any progress with literacy skills,
- felt that Gareth was working within a group of four who were the next ability group causing concern with regards to literacy,
- although somewhat concerned about Natalie's shouting out she was not worried at that time about her literacy ability,
- as an inexperienced teacher, having spent her first year working with older pupils, she said that she felt,

"ill equipped to meet the needs of pupils with such low levels of reading." Liz

Record of incidents

Whereas recorded incidents involved many children in the class the same names occurred on many occasions.

I carried out a further observation in order to target my intervention through an analysis of needs of the focus group. I used an observation schedule that enabled me to record the activity of each child in turn, a comment was made against each child's name approximately every two minutes. I used a code system to note the teaching or other activities in the class (see appendix 1). At the end of the lesson I used the raw data to describe each child's behaviours and interactions with others during the time period.

- *Nathan*

Whilst the class teacher, Liz, was addressing the whole class, telling them that they were going to read together, Nathan shuffled on his bottom away from the carpet area and began to pull parts from a display on the wall. Requests from his teacher to stop were ignored. When he was brought back to the group by an NTA he continually tried to return to the display. He was prevented by the NTA physically turning him around to face the teacher and moving her chair to sit behind him. After the fourth time he began to swear at the NTA and kick pupils who were sitting nearby. He was asked by Liz to get up and stand in the corner, which he did. At no time during the 20 minutes that this was taking place did I observe him answer any questions about the text or join in any reading. When the session moved on to individual work Nathan sat with James and the NTA. The task they were given was to read a number of sentences from a reading book (a book with a reading age of about 6 to 6.5 years), copy them and draw a picture to illustrate their writing. Both boys were keen to read but found it difficult to share the attention of the NTA (they were reading different books). When, after some argument, both boys had read 2 or 3 pages Nathan began to draw. At this time Liz came over and asked him to do the writing task, he ignored this request (at this time the NTA was helping another group). Nathan then decided to trace the picture from the book and James copied him. This upset Nathan and he began to throw pencils and rulers about and knock chairs over. Later he got a jigsaw from a cupboard and sat on the floor making it.

- *James*

James was quiet during the whole class teaching session, I did not observe him making any comments to others and he did not volunteer any answers to the teacher's questions. On the majority of occasions I noted his behaviour during the 20-minute whole class session he was playing with his shoelaces, continually taking them out and rethreading them. Occasionally he broke off from this task to play with bits of fluff from the new carpet. Following the class moving into independent work James read some pages to the NTA, he appeared keen to go on to finish the book and begun to sulk when told he must stop and copy the text. The next three observations recorded James sat with his head down on the table refusing to speak to the NTA. Later James looked up and saw Nathan tracing and begun to do the same. Following Nathan's outburst James followed Liz around the room saying that it wasn't fair and telling her that Nathan had a jigsaw out. After being ignored he sat back down and completed his drawing, only getting up occasionally to get particular coloured pencils from the other groups.

- *Gareth*

Gareth would not initially sit on the carpet with the rest of the class. He sat underneath a nearby table and made clicking and squeaking noises. Several times Liz told him to come out, he then moved around a great deal as if he was coming nearer to her but remained under the table. When class questions were asked Gareth shouted out inappropriate answers. E.g. the story was Cinderella. When asked who the main characters might be in the book Gareth shouted out 'three little pigs'. When asked to describe Cinderella he shouted 'a slapper'. He did not join in the reading of the text. The individual task for Gareth was to retell the story in his own words. For the first ten minutes of the session I only observed him sharpening pencils and wandering around the room talking to others. After the NTA came over to sit with his group he settled down and began to write. Each sentence he checked out with her saying 'do you think this sounds okay' and apart from a few common words, such as it, is, and, he asked her for the spelling of each word before he wrote it.

- *Natalie*

Natalie was not observed joining in the reading of the text but did answer questions the teacher asked of the whole class, although she shouted answers rather than waited to be asked. When others made comments that she thought were wrong she was very hurtful towards them, calling them 'stupid' and 'thicko'. She often told the teacher when others were not paying attention and made suggestions such as 'you ought to tell him off Miss'. When the session moved on to individual work Natalie spent most of her time wandering around the class picking up things like pencils, books and pencil cases from other desks and looking to see what others had written. As far as her own work was concerned she wrote very little apart from an opening sentence, possibly copied from someone on the same table.

It was at this stage of the study that I needed to design my intervention in the form of teaching strategies and lesson structure and content. In my quest to see how the NLS framework would support or hinder this intervention I would teach the whole class, thereby seeing how the individual needs of the above four pupils could be met whilst meeting the needs of the rest of the class. I began by trying to make sense of the four pupils' responses to their learning context. Here I drew upon the work by Susan Hart when she came to analyse the situations in the classroom using, as she termed them, the inter-connective, the oppositional, the decentred and the hypothetical modes of interpretation (Hart, 1996). These four modes and her rationale behind them I have explained in Chapter 6.

Inter-connective Mode

Although I had no details about the reading and writing skills of the pupils their performance later in the lesson suggested that the shared text might be inaccessible to them. The story 'Cinderella' may not have appealed to them or seemed relevant. For teaching to be effective the content must be made relevant to children's prior knowledge and experiences and the tasks given must take account of previously acquired skills.

Could the learning objective set be met through the story of 'Cinderella' had the teacher approached it a different way or is it that the learning objective itself is not relevant at this point in time to these children? Liz had chosen to select her teaching objectives from Year 3 of the framework document rather than Year 5 but for both year groups the range given for the first term's work is 'stories with familiar settings'. By choosing the range from Term 2 'traditional stories' (this was brought about because of an incorrectly printed teacher resource book that Liz was using) the pupils did not have the previous term's experiences to draw upon. The pupils' negative behaviours could be considered, in part, as a response to the classroom and the task they had been given.

Oppositional Mode

Of course it could be that the material presented was indeed done so in such a way as to be relevant to the children but the four pupils chose not to become involved. One cannot make an assumption that a student's lack of application is because of the task set. Any proposal that children are not involved in the learning process because of a mismatch between their skills, knowledge and prior experiences and the curriculum presented must not diminish the role of the child itself. In chapter 2 I presented the view that the present government wants to run schools as an industry, whose job it is to produce a workforce. One area that categorises schools as different from industry is that they are dealing with children who have, and frequently exercise, freedom of choice.

Decentred Mode

It may be that despite all Liz's efforts in the classroom the four pupils in question 'chose' not to participate in the lesson in the way she and I wanted. In order to be able to suggest why this might be true one must consider the lesson from the pupil's viewpoint. A major change that had occurred during the previous few weeks was the setting up of a 'unit' in an outside classroom, as I have detailed in the previous chapter.

Some of the pupils in the 'unit' had been in the classes that Liz's pupils were drawn from. It could be that the four children viewed the 'unit' as somewhere to aspire to and saw disruptive behaviour as a way to get there. Many of the behaviours I described above succeeded in gaining the attention of an adult. There is a possibility that the four pupils, unable to gain sufficient attention for their acceptable behaviour and work, chose to attract adult attention by negative behaviour. This could be compounded by inconsistency on the part of the teacher as, unsure of what level of disruption would gain attention, unacceptable behaviour escalated until it succeeded. The dilemma the teacher was possibly facing might be how to give some positive feedback to the pupils for behaviour that had, by her own admission, improved whilst at the same time not suggesting that it was now acceptable.

Hypothetical Mode

It appeared to me that the four pupils in question were not able to take an active part in the lesson that was taught. Whether this was because they did not have the decoding skills required to join in the shared reading, or did not see the relevance and chose not to, I was not sure but I felt that I had to remove the decoding requirement from my first lessons.

Part Two

The last section came to the conclusion that four pupils were to become the foci of the study. These four were a cause for concern within the class because their behaviours were perceived by the teachers to be disruptive to their lessons. They were not taking an active part in the lesson that was taught. This may have been because they did not have had the decoding skills required to join in the shared reading or the ability to complete the independent tasks set then, not engaged in the tasks to an appropriate level and possibly as a consequence, were a disruption to the others in the class. This study takes the stance that, although it is possible that there exists some 'with-in' child difficulties, the focus will be on the classroom, on the learning environment and curriculum content. What can I as a teacher do to diminish the difficulties that these children are having at the learning interface?

As a starting point I felt that it was important to create a consistent approach that would enable all the children in the class to develop trust in me and begin to develop trust, empathy and respect for their peers. Whatever the content of my lessons they needed to be a vehicle for me to ensure that all the class understood what I considered to be appropriate classroom behaviour. The idea of beginning with circle time activities, some of which I took from Mosley 1996, appealed to me as I felt the focus on speaking and listening would not disadvantage the group of children with low levels of reading and writing and would lead to the development of spoken language that is critical to enhancing understanding and learning (see Chapter 6).

The Next Cycle

Children's literacy development,

Permeating throughout my research cycles is the quest to create a consistent approach that would enable all the children in the class to develop trust in me and begin to develop trust, empathy and respect for their peers. The use of Circle Time would enable me to ensure that the dialogue was relevant to the children and built upon their prior knowledge. There would be opportunities for children to appropriate understanding from others whilst allowing me to scaffold their responses where necessary as suggested by the work of Bruner (1990).

I felt the focus of my initial cycle should be on the speaking and listening that takes place within the literacy classroom. I felt that this would not disadvantage any children with low levels of reading and writing and would lead to the development of spoken language that is critical to enhancing understanding and learning. Although the Framework for Teaching the National Literacy Strategy makes little explicit reference to speaking and listening schools are compelled to ensure that their English scheme of work covers the Programmes of Study. It is clear that speaking and listening as a form of communication encompasses the type of activities that would form the first cycle of my intervention; communicating effectively, clearly and fluently, appreciating the conventions of discussion and conversation like turn-taking and responding to what is heard (SCAA, 1994). In addition to the above I wanted to ensure that the lessons provided all the children with the chance to participate in the same activity, i.e. no one would be excluded because of their inability to decode. In terms of building the children's self-esteem and providing opportunities for the group to appropriate the behaviours of their peers I felt that any withdrawal of anyone in the group was to be avoided.

The interventions I decided upon

The idea of beginning with circle time activities, some of which I took from Mosley 1996, came about because I had used these activities in the past and had found them useful in building up interactions with a new class. Within this first phase I provided a model of interactive language, the conventions and constraints of which we first discussed as a group, i.e. listening to others, being polite, not swearing, etc. I also used the Circle Time as a vehicle to set ground rules for their behaviour and participation, any breaking of the rules meant a 'time-out' when the child was not allowed to participate. I introduced a 'magic stone' without which one was not allowed to speak, passing this around the circle to ensure turn taking. Each oral activity had a frame within which we worked, beginning with very narrow ones where I gave the children most of the language they should use and allowing only limited scope for their individuality. I did this in order to ensure the class could concentrate on the conventions and constraints during these earlier sessions. I began each session with a couple of games during which everyone became involved, e.g. moving around if you have ..., copying action from the person on your left, selecting others who have the same

For the main activity of each lesson I chose subjects that would:

- enable the class to build a class identity. As the class was newly formed from others within the school I wanted to create a shared identity that had value. I wanted to create the idea that this was a good class to belong to and what we were doing was very special. If we all worked together we could become the best class to be in, one where everybody helped one another and worked together on tasks.
- raise self esteem. As part of the above it was important that nobody was allowed to fail or to feel left out. I wanted my group to feel they were valued members of the class and that their opinions counted.
- begin to empathise with others. As part of this it was important that Natalie began to realise what impact her put downs had upon others.

In later lessons I had began to consider emotions with the class and decided that by taking this further into areas of conflict there would opportunities to discuss problem solving and resolution strategies that would be useful to all, but in particular to the group. In order to initiate discussion that was pertinent to the issues in a way that would not feel threatening to the pupils I chose to use photographs and pictures. In this way the pupils could use the pictures to depersonalise their emotions and share with the class feelings that were not routed in their own personal conflicts. Each image to be shown to the class would be of conflict, we will then share ideas as to what might have led to the situation, how people may be affected by the situation, what they may be feeling and finally how the conflict might be resolved from a number of perspectives.

Collection of data

Throughout this period of my study, whilst I was actually teaching the lessons, I made some brief notes as the lessons progressed but had to rely mainly upon writing up the events later in the day (see Appendix 2 for an example). In order to make this manageable I did not record the whole lessons but selected data surrounding the four children who are the foci of the study. I recorded incidents surrounding times when they made significant progress towards either the literacy learning objectives or in their interactions either with myself or with their peers. Having done this I read it through and discussed it with the class teacher, who remained in the room throughout each lesson, to check both on the accuracy of my data and to ascertain her interpretations of the events.

The demands of the NLS

One aspect of the literacy hour that concerned teachers, as I reported upon earlier, was the need for the class to work together for the first half hour of the lessons. A major barrier to learning, as seen by the teachers, was the children's inability to concentrate for this length of time. I began this first cycle expecting to run the sessions for 10 to 15 minutes before gradually increasing the time we were working together as a whole class.

In fact I found that, even from the very beginning, a 30-minute session was possible without children becoming restless. I initially assumed that this was because I had removed the threat of written work from the lesson and told the class that, and covered the learning objectives in a way that was relevant and interesting to them. However I suspect that other factors were also present, not least my role as a peripatetic teacher who was viewed as someone with a certain authority, representing as I did the LEA. The children were all familiar with inspectors and LEA advisers visiting classroom and the first image they had of me was when I arrived, dressed in a suit and carrying a briefcase, in their classrooms and observing lessons. Whilst this may have had little effect on their behaviour in those lessons maybe they now saw me as in a position of higher authority than their class teacher and 'chose' to behave in a different way.

The needs of the individual children,

Initially Nathan would not sit in the circle with us and, when the class teacher challenged him and then sent him out of the room, threw objects and chairs around. My notes show that this refusal to conform became less as the sessions continued, whereas on the second session it was nearly eight minutes before he joined in by the second week he complied immediately when I said 'get into a circle'. Two factors that I feel may have been causal here were my ignoring the behaviour I didn't want and Nathan himself wanting to participate. A behaviourist viewpoint would be that Nathan wanted to conform and would respond to positive praise and negative reinforcement of the unwanted behaviour, and indeed this did seem to be working. Nathan himself appeared to want to become more involved. He could have sat in the circle and not contributed, but in fact often took a leading part in moving the discussion on and became excited about what he had to say as is shown in this extract from my notes when we were discussing things that made us happy or sad or another emotion;

“I’m not scared of nowt” “Yeh, but I bet your brother
dun’t hit you like mine does.” ... “What would you do
then?”

Nathan

Both James and Gareth joined in the circle games and participated in the discussions about things they liked or disliked and things that made them feel happy or sad. I am sure that sitting on chairs helped as there appeared to be less to distract them, i.e. no carpet or shoes to play with. Furthermore each had their own personal space which may have helped to prevent any accidental touching or nudging that I feel sure would have led to a dispute. When this occurred to me I looked back at the field notes from my original observations. Of the minor incidents, such as pushing, nudging, complaining about other children and talking or complaining to other children, the vast majority, over 80%, occurred whilst the class were sitting together on the carpet. Could it be that just by giving each child their own space the potential for disputes was lessened?

What both boys found difficult was empathising with others, or at least discussing their thoughts about the feelings of others. When we looked at some pictures and photographs of conflicts they could suggest reasons why the subjects had physically hurt themselves;

“She’s probably fallen over and that’s why she’s crying.”

James

“I think she’s being hit by one of others.”

Gareth

These were photographs where others in the class had suggested the child was crying because her friends had fallen out with her or wouldn’t let her play, describing her as feeling as upset, left out, feeling alone, in describing similar stimuli Gareth and James used vocabulary such as; hurt, in pain, sad.

There are a number of possibilities for this; could it be that the boys did not comprehend what I was asking of them, did they not understand that different interpretations were possible or maybe they did not have the vocabulary available to interpret the stimuli in any different ways. It is also possible that the boys had the vocabulary to talk about different emotions but chose not to.

Of the group Natalie was more able to empathise with the subjects in the images, she was also able to suggest resolutions that involved discussion and compromise rather than one person's will imposed on the others. One image suggested that two children were fighting over which television programme to watch. Natalie suggested that they could divide the week up so that each had a turn to pick on different nights. She had very strong ideas about what was happening in each picture and felt, and stated that everybody else was wrong if they disagreed, stating her views very strongly. Throughout this first phase Natalie had to be reminded to wait for others to finish speaking and wait her turn but these reminders became less frequent as the lessons progressed. During my initial observation (see Appendix 1) she had kept up an almost constant stream of interruptions but during the last lesson of the cycle I did not record any. Was this a true picture and if so what had brought this about? Interestingly when I discussed this with Liz she felt that,

“She’s [*Natalie*] a lot better than she was but she still interrupts and chatters too much. She’s alright with this work but when I was trying to do some R.E. yesterday she was awful, I had to send her out so we could get on” Liz

Was Natalie actually interrupting less in my lessons? Certainly the number of times I felt that I must react in some way had decreased or was it that my perception of those interruptions had changed and I now reacted less to the same incidents? What had brought about any change, either in Natalie's behaviour or in my perceptions?

Looking at this from Natalie's viewpoint, how did Liz react and how did I react to an interruption? Looking back at my observation of Liz's teaching I was able to see that when Natalie shouted something out in class virtually every incident incurred a comment or action from Liz.

Natalie said in a loud voice, "We've done this before."

Liz, "Never mind we're going to do something different this time."

Natalie, "How d'ya know Miss?"

Liz, "Stop shouting out Natalie."...

Natalie, "I think them sisters are well hard Miss."

Liz, "Put your hand up first Natalie." ...

Natalie, "I think..."

Liz, "I've told you before, you'll have to go out if you can't stop shouting out."

(Observation, Appendix 1)

If Natalie is seeking attention from Liz she is gaining it by shouting out could it be that she is provoking Liz into sending her out because standing on her own outside the room is preferable to remaining in the lesson? This contrasts with my framework for the lessons whereby any transgression of our rules incurred a time out within the class when they were not able to participate and I made clear that nobody would be sent out of the classroom. Interrupting others or shouting out I dealt with by restating the behaviour I wanted, i.e. "Wait until you have the magic stone before you speak." We need to all listen to what X has to say." and ignoring the comment or idea that the interruption or shouting had made. Was I subconsciously not noticing Natalie's interruptions or were they having less impact upon me because I was only teaching the class for a shorter period of time than Liz? Was Natalie now more engaged in the lessons and had this brought about fewer interruptions?

The inclusive classroom

A large part of my challenge was to ensure that the needs of all children were met. I have already stated that any action research must make a choice as to the particular direction in which it is moving, as described in Chapter 6, and for this study that direction is towards the implementation of the NLS. To this end I had chosen learning objectives from The Programmes of Study for English (SCAA, 1994) that addressed, in part, objectives from the NLS. At the same time I was aware of the lesson content for the following weeks and how that would build upon and extend this work to cover specified NLS objectives. In order to achieve the objectives I had set I needed to address the difficulties some pupils were having in some way. Meeting the needs of these pupils had enabled me to cover more in my lessons, as less teaching time was taken up with classroom management thus allowing others in the class better access to the literacy curriculum.

There is always something of a compromise between meeting the needs of an individual child and those of the class as a whole. There were times during the above lessons when I felt that Gareth and James would have benefited by working in a smaller, self selected group where they may have felt more able to discuss emotive issues. This would have allowed for a greater exploration of their difficulties which may have led my interventions in a different direction. Similarly Natalie would have being able to give great input, and obtained more adult attention, within a small group. Opportunities for this can be provided within the structure of the literacy hour, although my study stopped short of implementing such group work.

The Next Cycle

Literacy Development

During the second cycle the lessons, whilst retaining the framework of the circle time we had established, were to move more towards the literacy hour structure by including shared reading and writing rather than just the shared oral work as in the previous cycle. I did not want to disadvantage the group because of any difficulties they may have accessing text and chose to begin with shared writing, where I would act as the scribe for the class. The text we created would be a vehicle for shared reading. It was important that the literacy lessons met the needs of all the pupils and I therefore initially chose teaching objectives from the Framework Document.

‘To understand how the use of expressive and descriptive language can, e.g. create moods, arouse expectations, build tension, and describe attitudes and emotions.

To collaborate with others to write stories in chapters, using plans with particular audiences in mind.’

(DfEE, 1998 p.40-41)

As I planned the structure of the lessons I came to realise that the context to achieve the above objectives could be taken from the age appropriate Year 5 section as detailed later. The lessons were to begin with a short circle time game during which I reminded them of our rules. The main activity would be shared writing during which time we constructed a story. During this story writing I stated that whatever anyone said would be true as long as it did not contradict what someone had said earlier, thus providing opportunities to reinforce good listening skills. Shared reading during the literacy lesson would focus on what we had written previously. This text should provide sufficient challenge for the better readers within the class whilst at the same time be a familiar content, which would hopefully provide some support for the less able readers.

The interventions

Clay (1993) and Beard (1990) are amongst those whose work puts forward the idea that successful readers are able to draw upon the literature they have read previously to help them make sense of the context and thereby are more able to read increasingly challenging text. Some children are constantly struggling with simple text, such as those contained in some reading schemes where the banal vocabulary, language structure and context produce uninteresting story content. For these children the decoding of individual words 'takes over' and this struggle leaves little room to think about how stories are constructed or the vocabulary used and additional cue sources available to the more able reader, such as the grammatical structure of written language, are not utilised. Because the four children in the study did not have as a background a range of reading they were not able to draw upon the content of this when writing. The NLS makes much of such a background when it highlights the need to be familiar with the structure of a range of genre and then requires children to write in particular genre:

From Year 5 Term 2 of the NLS Framework Document

'1 to identify and classify the features of myths, legends and fables,

11 write their own versions of legends, myths and fables, using structures and themes identified in reading;'

(DfEE, 1998 p46-7)

I decided that the group would be more able to tackle text if they were first familiar with its content. What better way than to turn the above objectives on their head and create our own story as a class? A text where pupils would have the experience of reading such structures, and then use that text to identify and classify the features of a story. This would ensure that the text I was asking the group to read had some familiarity providing additional cues to aid reading, they would also be able to 'tell the story' using the grammar and prose of their spoken language rather than the 'unfamiliar' conventions of written language.

By taking over the secretarial aspects of story writing I would remove the ‘fear of failure’ that so often holds creativity back.

Collection of data

During this section of the study it proved problematic to collect the data I required, mainly because I was spending large amount of my time writing down the children’s suggestions for the story structure, vocabulary, etc. It therefore proved even more vital that I checked out my recollections with the class teacher at the end of each lesson. Once again I had to limit the scope of data I collected to potentially significant ones surrounding the four pupils.

The demands of the NLS,

Initially the ‘collaboration with others’ as described in the NLS caused some difficulties. The class teacher confirmed my suspicions that the class, more often than not, went along with the suggestions that either Nathan or Natalie made. Writing a story as a whole class was a challenge to us all and at times I felt that it was in danger of becoming my story as I tried to lead it towards the good conquers evil structure I was looking for. Within the time scale of the daily literacy hour I could not see how to cover the range of text in sufficient detail to enable the children to fully understand the different structures. I had initially allocated this work over the half term but by week 2 I decided it was probably an impossible task and that I would have to reschedule the work on science fiction. The NLS described how in the shared reading session the text chosen is a challenging one where pupils ‘join in’ the reading where they can. Unfortunately I was met with a different scenario as the following extracts from my field notes describe:

Tuesday – began by reading again the first part of our story. Natalie seems to be trying – think she’s listening to Olivia next to her – I can hear odd words she is saying. Nothing from the boys though – not even much looking at the text.

Wednesday – read through again beginning with Mondays work – Natalie a bit distracted today – getting something but only in odd sentences, not trying to keep up today. Nathan sitting near me and looking – opens mouth occasionally but no sound. Nothing from either Gareth or James.

Thursday – Gave pointer to Gareth – he keeps losing his place and we have to stop – is the task beyond him or is he deliberately doing it wrong? Can hear Natalie muttering under her breath, can't make out what she is saying, and decide to ignore it. None of the group joining in today other than an odd word from Natalie.

Friday – Just read yesterday's work today – were the class getting bored reading from the beginning? Gave pointer to Natalie – followed perfectly, even when I went back over some words. Nathan chose to sit near me – Gareth and James quiet again.

This pattern continued – I investigated further by visiting the class during reading time towards the end of the following week. All the group could manage the majority of the common words, such as those noted in the framework document for reception through Y2 (DfEE, 1998 p60-1), we were putting in our story when they came across them in their reading books but did not read them in the shared reading sessions.

The needs of the individual children

Both Nathan and Natalie demonstrated how difficult they found it if I did not take up their ideas or if others in the class suggested some improvements to them. At one time Nathan said, "and then he [the giant in our story] chops their heads off." When I pointed out that we had already decided that the giant was a good one and only used his powers to help others Nathan turned his back to me and didn't speak for about five minutes. It may be that Nathan had forgotten the agreed plot and on reflection I could have dealt with his remark more sensitively. Luckily other children also contradicted the story line numerous times so I was able to use the incident to confirm the approach I was using, reinforcing the need to listen to others and dealing with remarks from all children in a similar way.

One day Natalie suggested I wrote, "He looked around at the children." I asked the class if anyone had any ideas how the Giant might have looked around, one child suggested 'glared' and immediately Natalie said, "That's what I said." She frequently accused those around her of 'copying' off her, stating that, "I've just said that." when they made suggestions. By making the story writing process a joint effort it enabled Natalie and Nathan to 'take credit' for the ideas alongside everybody else.

The inclusive classroom

After the first week of this cycle I became worried that the pace at which I was going was too slow for some members of the class. Whereas the group were, I think, beginning to benefit from listening to the suggestions others were making I was aware that some children would be capable of writing their own story, or at least in collaboration with one or two others. This was brought home to me by a girl in the class who produced a chapter of 'our story' she had written at home. The structure of the literacy hour supports small group 'guided' writing but how would this fit in with the shared writing we were doing as a whole class? Would allowing groups to continue our story prevent us working on it together? In other classes I had used the group work as a basis for shared work, enlarging it so we could all read it then working together to make improvements to it. Doing this would present my group with an unseen text that might prove too difficult for them, especially given that I had not, as yet, managed to get them to join in fully with the seen text.

I felt that providing for the needs of the group and yet meeting those of the class as a whole was problematic. Was the prospect of reading aloud with the whole class too stressful for the group or were they in fact benefiting from the experience of listening to the more able read? Was I enabling equal participation by all children? It appeared to me to be a constant struggle to not stifle the enthusiasm that children such as Nathan and Natalie were demonstrating and yet at the same time not allow them to dominate at the expense of some of the quieter children.

Part Three

An Evaluation of the Study

What had I set out to achieve by conducting the study? It may be that by trying to achieve a dual aim of implementing the NLS and creating an inclusive literacy classroom I had achieved neither. Using the same format as that I had used during the action research this section attempts to analyse the main findings of the study and evaluate its aims.

Literacy development

At the beginning of the study I set out how I thought the reading and writing skills of the group needed to be preceded by oral and aural work. The main aim of this work was to establish the parameters within which I felt I could teach. That is not to say that these are in any way 'correct' or that other individuals would have established a similar framework. Maslow (1943) in describing his hierarchy of need is clear that learning is dependent upon certain needs having been met. Safety, through the security of a consistent approach within school, is therefore a predisposition to learning and one that I felt I needed to establish.

The assessment of the group's speaking and listening skills was beyond the scope of my research and no quantifiable data exist about their reading or writing abilities. Indeed running as the study did over a relatively short time alongside the other lessons taking place it was impossible to make presumptions about its effect upon any perceived increased skill in these areas. So what did the study achieve in terms of children's literacy development? I believe that it was instrumental in creating a framework in which learning could take place by removing some of the barriers to learning that existed. A hindrance to learning was when members of the group were excluded from the classroom, by establishing a consistent framework within which I operated appeared to encourage the group to conform and hence remain in the room.

Where the teaching had been interrupted by outbursts the coverage of the curriculum had suffered. Less time spent on such interruptions had enabled all of the children to spend a greater amount of time focused on the lesson content.

The demands of the NLS

Through the study I was able to demonstrate how the individual segments of the hour can be linked together by subject content and how the Framework Document can be used to select teaching objectives rather than allowing these to occur haphazardly from the planned activities. I felt that the text objectives lent themselves to accessibility by all in the class but required certain speaking and listening skills as a prerequisite, hence the cycle of the study based upon those skills. Although the teaching of these skills is a requirement of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study they are not explicitly woven into the Framework for Teaching the National Literacy Strategy. The selecting of sentence and word level objectives from the Framework is, I feel, more problematic due to the cumulative nature of some of the skills required. There are difficulties in matching up the thorough teaching of facts or a skill and the need for coverage that the NLS expects. The expectation that all pupils will, with the correct teaching, be able to 'catch up' with their peers suggests a community of homogenous pupils with similar prior experience or knowledge, furthermore a group who do not use these acquired items to make sense of the new concepts they meet. Such an explanation of the development of learning I find at odds with existing research.

The expectation of the NLS is that the literacy will begin with the whole class either reading or writing a shared text. My study demonstrated that although I could instigate shared writing the group did not participate to any great extent in shared reading. Nothing in the framework document or the appendix relating to children with Special Educational Needs suggested strategies that I should try.

Yet the NLS indicated that with 'the correct teaching' my group should catch up with their relevant age group if I instigated the Literacy Hour. Is the inference then that, apart from those children the additional guidance suggest have serious difficulties, the shared reading is effective for all?

The needs of the individual children

My initial reaction was that all the children in the focus group made progress, mainly in their ability to conform and therefore not 'exclude themselves' from opportunities to learn. But I am reminded of Hart's discussion of the progress made by the children in her study (1994) when she points out the need to recognise that progress may be in many directions and we must not fall into the danger of only recognizing it when the progress is in the direction we want or expect. It is possible that I had created a situation whereby the group remained in the classroom, but in doing so was not actually meeting their individual needs. In discussion of the cycles of the study I referred to the possibility of small group work being more effective in meeting the needs of the group and maybe, without my intervention, that would have inevitability happened.

The inclusive classroom

The inclusive classroom continually produces the conflict of meeting the needs of all whilst using a child-centred approach. The NLS is clear that work must provide a challenge to the more able child and suggests that the less able will benefit from this approach, but what of the less able child who, when they find the work too challenging, gives up trying, becomes inattentive or even disrupts the education of others? If the needs of the group were best met by working in a small group does it follow that endeavouring to include them meant that the rest of the children suffered in some way? The inclusive model, as I have described earlier in this thesis, must accept that there is a continuum of need and at some point along that continuum the inclusive classroom cannot effectively meet the needs of all. Whilst I am not suggesting that the class as described in my study was in this last category where does one draw the line?

The NLS relies upon the less able 'moving forward' by working alongside their peers. The teacher must ensure that the more able are sufficiently challenged if they are to progress. Surely there must be a position somewhere along this continuum where the gap between the least able and the most able pupils is such that this theory breaks down, especially within mixed aged classes when this gap might be at its widest. Is the NLS in danger of becoming a 'one size fits all' programme of work where, rather than creating a curriculum made to fit the individual child, teachers have to do their best to make their class fit in with it?

Analysis From Multiple Perspectives

At the end of the cycles of intervention I tried to analyse the whole of my data from a number of viewpoints, using Hart's modes of interpretation as a basis for my analysis (Hart, 1996).

Supporting a school that was placed in special measures brought a particular slant towards my study. I was working alongside a relatively inexperienced teacher who had possibly lost confidence in her own ability to teach literacy effectively. Furthermore she was faced with a 'new way of working' with the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and, by her own admission, did not know how begin to plan for or implement the daily literacy hour.

The behaviour of pupils, and in particular the four mentioned, was causing concern throughout the school and to the class teacher. Maslow (1943) in describing his hierarchy of need is clear that learning is dependent upon certain needs having been met. Safety, through the security of a consistent approach within school, is a predisposition to learning and one that, in the opinion of the head teacher and myself, had not been met. The initial cycles of the action research were successful in setting out parameters for the class to work within, all the lessons thereafter reinforced these and demonstrated a consistent approach towards them. The children responded to this approach by, over the space of some weeks, gradually conforming to the classroom conventions I had in place. The class teacher stated at the end of the study that,

"I knew I had to do something (*about their behaviour*) but I didn't know what. Now that you have set some rules and boundaries it's easier for me. I can just go along with what you put in place, I can do that. I felt before that I was always having to shout, people said wait for quiet but I'd be waiting for ever. Now I just start and they settle down and listen."

Interconnection mode

Firstly from the Interconnection mode, how much of the children's actions were appropriate responses when considered within the learning context.

If the home background the children came from did not put value upon listening to others speak without interrupting then the situation I was trying to create within the classroom was not familiar to the children. Hart puts it this way;

What we do not realise is that our own taken for granted norms of behaviour directly contradict what is normal cultural practice (e.g. timing of play is self-governed, not dictated by adults in these children's homes, toys that have to be put away are not familiar; story telling is a social activity and to remain silent is to fail to signal involvement).
(Hart, 1994 p38)

A negative interpretation of the data suggests that one major problem was the group's response to the shared reading. I wish to consider this not as a deficit within the child but rather as a response to the learning environment I had created. The pupils were able to demonstrate their decoding skills on a one to one basis so one suspects that the problem lay with the moving of the activity into the 'public arena' of the whole class. The fear of 'getting it wrong' in front of their peers was possibly too much for them and so they opted not to try.

Oppositional mode

Although I was teaching the class on a daily basis Liz was having much more contact with them. It is possible that when Liz first arrived in the school the reaction of the group was to try to disrupt the lessons.

As I stated in the previous section where I described the background of the school there was along history of supply teachers, some of who only remained for a few days or even a few hours. It is possible that the pupils viewed anybody new as providing the opportunity for distraction from lessons. By this time in my study the pupils had maybe understood that Liz was staying and therefore returned to what was their usual behaviour.

Action research surrounding one's own teaching can bring about criticism that any analysis of needs is based upon one's own assumptions. I might be guilty of interpreting the study from a biased stance because of my belief in the interventions I had put in place. Taking an oppositional viewpoint requires me to state what underlying assumptions I made of the situation. I assumed that by and large the pupils wanted to participate in lessons, joining in with their peers and receiving public recognition for their contributions. It is possible that although I perceived a change in their behaviour at the 'learning interface' this was brought about by changes I was unaware of that were happening outside of school. A pupil was permanently excluded from the school during this time and maybe parents and carers were putting pressure on their children to conform within school because they feared a similar fate? The behavioural unit was also now up and running including the home visits made by the Education Welfare Officer; this could also have been having an effect.

Decentred mode

Looking at the data from the pupils' viewpoint, a decentred mode, could it be that the novelty of a different teacher and a change in lesson content and delivery produced the changed behaviour. Was I a disappointment to them by not reacting in the same way that Liz did? Maybe they thought that the easiest way to get through my lessons was to just go along with whatever I wanted, after all I was only there for a short time.

From the group's point of view they probably had nothing to gain from joining in the shared reading.

Maybe they could remember what we had written the previous day, if not it did not matter because I would be reading it through. How much more enjoyable it might be to sit and listen to someone reading to you than to struggle through it yourself risking the chance that you might read something wrong? The shared writing was different; it did not matter if you couldn't spell the words or get it exactly right. It could be that these four children felt a certain amount of pride in what we achieved, after weeks when they had only managed to copy or write a short sentence of their own they had contributed to a whole story.

Hypothetical mode

In her thesis Hart (1994) reminds us that there are times when, before we can interpret children's responses, we need to develop our own ideas and seek out further knowledge. This hypothetical mode, as she named it, accepts that it might be possible to understand what we have seen but not with our present level of knowledge. It is necessary to suspend our judgement until such time, if ever, that we have all that which is needed to make that judgement. Of course one barrier to this is that we often do not know, and can therefore not recognise the significance of, what is as yet unknown.

What other analysis could be made of the data? Were there some 'within-child' difficulties that I was unaware of? Was the shared reading as described by the NLS appropriate for these four children but not in the way in which I had tackled it? Remembering that the class was newly formed and previous friendship groups dispersed was there something in the interactions between the whole class that I had not picked up on?

I have mentioned some of the changes that were occurring in the school during the study, one change that happened only during the course of it was the acting head teacher coming into the school. As an experienced head Carol had an immediate tangible impact upon the school.

She constantly walked around the school, visiting classroom and talking to children, and dealt with any incidents that were brought to her attention straight away. The changes in the behaviour of the group may have being an appropriate response to their place within an increasingly calmer and quieter school. All I can do is to interpret the data within the knowledge available to me and recognise that there may exist other things that would, if known, lead me to different conclusions.

Transparency, Validity and Transference

Whilst accepting the difficulties that participant research brings I have attempted to ensure, wherever possible, that my observations and reflections were validated by placing them against those of others. Just as I, in the recording or the omission of incidents during the study, may have subconsciously produced bias one must also consider the validity of the attempts I made to triangulate the evidence. The consultant head teacher was new into the school following the October half-term. She was placed in a similar position to myself, one of trying to make judgements about what was happening within the school and looking for ways in which to move the school towards its removal from special measures. To aid these judgements Carol had data available from interim inspection visits from OFSTED and the LEA, her own observations and discussions with all members of staff, therefore I feel that our decisions as to the content, class choice and pupil selection took into account a range of evidence. The class teacher was also instrumental in the selection of the group of pupils. It is impossible to ascertain how myself as a representative of the LEA and in a monitoring capacity affected Liz's teaching or her observations of the class under my tuition.

The study was a small one conducted only in one classroom. There are however, I feel, some elements of commonality with a wider community that suggest transference is a possibility. The class in question did not, in my opinion, contain pupils with severe or complex learning difficulties. In common with many classes there was a mixed ability range covering some children having difficulty acquiring literacy skills and some exhibiting behaviours that the school considered challenging. The study looked at how a common framework, the National Literacy Strategy, could be used in the class to enable access for all pupils.

As such I feel the Framework suggested strategies that could be used in Literacy Hour in similar classroom to enable inclusivity but my research produces some warnings as to how effective such a classroom is in terms of meeting the needs of all its pupils. In particular my study considered how speaking and listening could effectively be addressed within the Literacy Hour, within what I feel is within the spirit of the Framework for Teaching document. It should be remembered that I was an individual undertaking the study from a peripatetic position and therefore some care must be exercised in assuming the transference of my teaching.

My role as Literacy Consultant

In terms of meeting the objectives of my role as a literacy consultant within the school I feel that the study was successful. It must be noted that the study was however in conjunction with other work that I was doing in the school. It may be that the classroom strategies I used were greatly reinforced by the other work I did in the class covering other curriculum areas. Carrying out the action research enabled me to 'put into practice' the parts of the literacy hour that I was at the time discussing with the whole staff. Where teachers raised objections or anticipated difficulties I was able to use examples from within my own practice, and within their own school, to put forward possible solutions or strategies to try. Working as I did, for at times up to 20 hours a week, in the school the staff came to look upon me less in an LEA monitoring role and more in a supporting one. As the year went along many teachers would raise issues with me that I felt they did not feel able to do at the beginning. Did my work in the school make a difference? It did to the literacy experiences of one class of children and where I discussed my strategies with the whole staff there is hopefully the possibility that they will have begun to reflect upon their own practice.

Changes that could have improved the study

With hindsight I would have talked to some of the children in the class before beginning the study in this way I could have built up a picture of their literacy experiences, was it very different for the group of four children that were causing concern? With this information available it might be possible to detail some of the barriers to learning that were affecting their behaviours in school.

I made assumptions about the past success or failure that these four had experienced but it would have been useful to talk to them, and possibly their parents about this. The teacher who had taught many of the class members previously had left the school but would be a useful source of information.

I found it difficult to observe the class at the same time as teaching. For most of the time I had to rely upon scribbled notes and my memory when discussing the lessons with the class teacher. A video camera would have been useful for at least some of the sessions or maybe I could have mapped out the lesson and watched someone else teach it? I feel that the Action Research model was the correct one for the study. If the time scale had been greater then some form of quantitative data could have been collected about the children's behaviours or their responses, this would have evidenced what are my own views about the improvements towards inclusivity.

Chapter 9 Discussion and Conclusions

Question the research is designed to address; How can we include every child in literacy activities in the classroom?

Is the notion of the inclusive classroom and the National Literacy Strategy mutually exclusive or can one support the other? I am putting forward the case that the National Literacy Strategy can be used as a model to create an inclusive literacy classroom but with a grave warning. I believe it can only effectively create inclusivity when it is used in parallel with other exemplar of good inclusive practice and a comprehensive English programme of study with particular reference to speaking and listening.

As schools and indeed teachers become more autonomous they need to be looking closely at their own practices. Emphasis is now on school initiatives that will meet the needs of those who are struggling with the curriculum – leading to more preventative work and less remediation from outside the school. The starting point for my study was a school in crisis with a number of children not participating in literacy activities. I wanted to move towards an inclusive approach rather than placing any blame for the situation upon the children in question. Alongside this ‘looking for what will work’ practitioner research has the advantage of taking place within the setting you are investigating. Only by such an approach did I feel able to suggest that my experiences could have transference to other mainstream mixed ability classroom (Kincheloe, 1991). In making every attempt to view my data from multiple perspectives (Hart 1996, Faithorn 1992) I added validity to my understanding of the situation that presented.

Much criticism has surrounded the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. I have explained how it was developed from the Literacy Project.

Whilst one censure is that the project ran in particular underachieving schools my study was set in such a school and was therefore more effective than it might have been had it run in a higher achieving one. Teaching or indeed being a pupil in such schools should not be underestimated and this lends another aspect to all my research.

The absence of Speaking and Listening from the National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching document is a theme that runs through recent research (Wearmouth & Soler 2001, Dadds 1999, Corden 1999) but for me this does not mean that it is not implicit in all we do within the literacy classroom. I approached the Literacy Hour with a flexibility that Sainsbury 1998 suggests is necessary. By taking this liberal view I was able to cover a selection of objectives in a way that was relevant and meaningful to the children. It should be remembered that whereas the objectives set out what is to be taught the way in which they can be achieved is left to the individual teacher to decide. Although, because the study was only a short term, I could not address Sainsbury's concerns about the lack of time for sustained reading and writing or reading for pleasure by placing a greater emphasis on oral and aural skills within my study I was able to overcome some of the barriers to learning that reading and writing were creating.

Another reason for my emphasis on the spoken language was my desire to place my research within the social constructivist paradigm, basing my ideas upon Vygotski's theories (1962) surrounding his Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). With a curriculum based upon standard English it was in danger of failing many of the local children (Raben-Bisby 1995). If language is to be used as a cultural tool then children must be working within their ZPD, helped by the adults and others around them to scaffold their learning and with ample opportunities to engage in the sort of discourse that would lead them to assimilate new concepts.

Aspects of the particular perspective

The study took place in particular circumstances – an LEA with an inclusion policy that leads to many children educated within mainstream schools who would elsewhere be placed in the special school sector. And a school that was in ‘special measures’ with all the difficulties that I have described.

As a school in Special Measures Northtown had many concerns, some of which were brought about by the very process and identification of it as a ‘failing school’ (Richmond 2000). Consistency, feelings of self-worth and a sense of belonging to a community were things that the children lacked and the OFSTED process that judges all schools and all children against the same achievement loaded criteria had destroyed what little existed. Maslow (1943) makes much of these feelings and suggests that for these children any predisposition to learn is hampered when their fundamental needs are not met. Although I could not do very much about many of these needs I set out to ensure that those surrounding security were met within my classroom. This I did by creating consistency and familiarity of routines and boundaries. Rather than a behaviouristic approach that attempted to change the disruptive and difficult behaviours I tried to construct an inclusive classroom through the social structure I put in place. As reported in my study I sought to ensure I presented a consistent approach to the class and made the boundaries of acceptable behaviour open and clear. I consider this approach to be imperative, especially when one is new to a school. It is an area that children themselves consider an important measure of a ‘good teacher’ and was an important area if I was to gain the respect and trust of the pupils. The need to create a stable environment and the poor reading and writing skills among the group led me to focus on speaking and listening, using circle time to create the social construction I was seeking through spoken language.

A starting point for my study was to put in place the shared aspects of the daily literacy hour. At that point in time it appeared to me to be difficult if not impossible to manage due to the behaviour of the pupils within the school, and four pupils in particular in the class in which I later worked. Maslow (1943) puts forward a case for certain fundamental needs that must first be met before effective learning can take place. Dyson (1997) discusses the social and cultural background of children as a major causal factor in any failure to develop literacy skills. OFSTED (1993) found that schools in socially deprived areas did not exhibit the characteristics of effective schools. Whatever criticism is made of the OFSTED inspection process the report on Northtown School highlighted a number of factors that OFSTED itself suggests are not conducive to effective education. A high staff turnover linked to low staff morale was evident in the school and had considerable impact upon any consistency and continuity within the classrooms.

As described, and evidenced from the head teacher's observations, the classroom was not initially operating using an inclusive model. Children were withdrawn physically from the class on occasions and in this and other ways excluded from the curriculum presented to the majority of their peers. My study shows how it was possible to select teaching objectives from the Framework Document (DfEE, 1998) and make them accessible to the whole class but I found difficulty in managing the coverage that the NLS suggests is feasible. This could be partly because of the demands to first create classroom practice that supported this and in the longer term coverage may not have presented the same difficulties. What was vital to the success or otherwise of my study was the selection of lively strategies through which to teach the objectives, strategies that encouraged interaction rather than solitary reading or writing.

An inclusive approach to literacy

Throughout the research I viewed inclusion both as a basic human right (UNESCO, 1996) and as an effective model for learning. Children learn not just from adults but also from other pupils around them so an inclusive classroom needs opportunities for modelling, scaffolding and interaction. The study was designed to bring about an inclusive approach concentrating upon the whole class aspect of the literacy teaching. The two vital factors in choosing this approach were the rights of the child to access the National Curriculum and my own firm belief in the effectiveness of an inclusive classroom. Furthermore the new national curriculum documentation contains three clear principles for inclusion:

- setting suitable learning challenges
- responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
- overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

Wearmouth and Soler (2001) argue that these principles cannot be met under a Literacy Strategy that stresses whole class and group work.

They suggest that a conflict exists between the Framework for Teaching document and the National Curriculum inclusion statement, making comparisons between a strategy that advocates whole class or group teaching against the requirement to meet the diversity of need. Whilst that may be true in terms of some of the reading and writing objectives is that so very different from other curriculum areas? Within a mixed ability class can one truly respond appropriately to pupils' diverse learning needs? Surely there is always some compromise when teachers cannot devote enough time to any individual? By focussing my study on the areas of speaking and listening I attempted to work within a somewhat narrower spread of ability and felt that I was able to respond more easily to individual needs.

My argument for inclusivity as an effective model for learning draws upon the established theories of Vygotsky (1962) and Bruner (1990) about the development of literacy. Literacy does not develop in a vacuum but within a social context.

It is a lifelong development as we assimilate the evolving language around us continually. One has only to meet with people from a different generation, locality or cultural background to realise the diverse and ever changing nature of literacy. Our skills develop over time as we are exposed to the new stimuli, fitting the new vocabulary into our existing knowledge, so children learn by interactions with their peers and by instruction from them. The teacher is not alone in providing a role model or directing learning. Raban-Bisby (1995) supports this view but sees the National Curriculum as a model supporting homogenate learning. My study's findings show how a particular group of pupils were able to develop the conventions of dialogue within the class by listening to others and by the scaffolding that myself and the children provided. Such a situation does not arise when pupils are withdrawn individually or in ability groups and receive that support only from the adult. The above model of an inclusive classroom is all rather at odds with the New Zealand approach that the National Literacy Strategy is said to have developed from and as such forms part of my critique on the strategy itself.

Discussion of the research

It is clear that one of the major criticisms of the NLS lies in its failure to properly address the acquisition and development of spoken language. If, as Vygotsky believed, early language is imperative in the development of thinking and leads to the internal thought that creates understanding, an impoverished vocabulary and poor listening skills will surely be a barrier to learning. OFSTED's report on Northtown School notes the poor speaking and listening skills on entry. One could argue as to the criteria against which this was judged but the National Curriculum that has to be taught is the same for all primary schools regardless of the community they serve. Children such as the ones in my study, from socially and culturally deprived backgrounds, come into school with linguistic skills ill equipped to cope with the demands placed upon them by a 'middle-class' curriculum.

I have made reference to the use of Circle Time to fulfil some of the needs that Maslow refers to as hierarchical and a necessity for effective learning. The topics I chose enabled me to ensure that the dialogue was relevant to the children and built upon their prior knowledge and understanding, an important factor according to Cox (1995). The study demonstrates how I began with topics that were not threatening to the pupils in that they began with straightforward indisputable facts before moving onto their opinions. Pupils could 'pass' at any time if they did not want to respond. These early sessions allowed me to build trust and establish the conventions of circle time. The language development was evident when I moved the topics on to discuss emotions. This provided opportunities for children to appropriate understanding from others whilst allowing me to scaffold their responses where necessary.

Alongside the appropriation of language in terms of its development the circle time model allowed me to address the disaffected behaviours exhibited by the group of children central to the study. Although agreeing with the views of Mittler (1999), that provision to address the needs of socially disadvantaged children must consider the needs of the community from which they come once again I am limited within the scope of the study. What I could provide, and the study shows that I did, was a decisive approach to behaviour management. I was open with the class as to what was expected of them and what would happen if they stepped outside the boundaries I had set. But I do not view this approach as teacher led discipline as the 'rules', about listening to others, turn taking, taking account of the viewpoints of others etc. all surrounded social courtesy. Is this here the central part of the conflicts that had arisen? One might argue that I was imposing my opinions of the conventions of social interactions upon the class but I maintain that we, as teachers, cannot help but take our backgrounds into the classroom. To allow the anti-social behaviours to continue would surely have constructed a classroom that, whilst meeting the needs of a minority, did not meet the needs of the majority.

By being open about what my standards are and applying them consistently I feel I gained the trust of the class. This also served to create an inclusive classroom for those who had previously felt intimidated by or prevented from learning by the behaviour of others in the class. Did I produce a 'best fit' model whereby the behaviour of a few was modified in order to meet the needs of the majority? Quite possibly, but an inclusive literacy classroom must meet the needs of all and I would argue that it was an appropriate lesson content and teaching approach that brought about the changes rather than a programme that aimed to modify behaviour. By accepting that the difficulties lay at the interface of the children and the classroom I feel that the study attempted to make the literacy classroom fit all the pupils rather than the other way around.

The NLS directs teachers to begin the week with shared reading, moving on to shared writing later in the week. The text is to have a reading level above the average reading level of the class. I was however working with an unknown class and one containing children who had a long history of 'failure' in reading. I thought that choosing such a text would destroy the confidence that the pupils had begun to build through the oral work we had done and therefore chose to begin with shared writing. The effectiveness of mixed ability tuition lies in pupils learning from one another as I have discussed previously. The shared text level work described by the NLS fits in with this model perfectly. How strange therefore that in justifying the strategy Beard (1999) draws upon parallels with a New Zealand model that does not condone mixed ability shared work for all.. One thing that the NLS has done is to open discussion about the teaching of reading and writing amongst all primary teachers.

Whereas the English National Curriculum at its inception had an emphasis on understanding the meaning of print by 1994 knowledge about the alphabet and sounds had come to the forefront (Raban-Bisby, 1995). The study reflected the difficulty in creating participation during the shared reading sessions.

If the complexity of the text is too great there is a danger that those unable to access it will not engage with the teaching, too simplistic a text and one could lose the attention of the more able readers. Whatever the text chosen it must be one that interests and appears relevant to all children. My study shows that I largely failed in my attempts to promote shared reading by all but is this an issue? Reading aloud places additional pressure on children and the emphasis in school on this is surely because it is the easiest way to assess a child's decoding skills rather than its value as a tuition method. A far truer test of reading skills is the extraction of meaning from the text and this is what all the class were able to engage in, albeit with some support for two of them.

The implementation of the sentence and word elements of the NLS within the literacy was not without problems. Whereas the text objectives can be covered in a way that meets the needs of all pupils in the class I found the sentence and in particular the word level objectives less easy to teach in an inclusive way. By their very nature some objectives are hierarchical and depended upon prior knowledge, knowledge that some of the children in the class did not have. The emphasis that the NLS places upon the word level phonic work moves toward spelling choices in Key Stage 2, however the class I taught did not have the prior knowledge of phonemes that the strategy appears to expect from junior aged children. Again we are asked to believe that the daily literacy hour will enable children to catch-up and yet until they have there are great difficulties running an inclusive word level lesson.

Carol, the head teacher, made comments about the necessity for good speaking and listening skills before progress in other areas could be made. In the extract in Appendix 4 she describes a model based only upon these first skills for Infant children. MacLure (1994) suggests that there is a range of rationales for oracy, she gives them labels of;

‘personal growth, cultural transformation, the improvement of learning and functional competence.’

p. 140

Having conducted the study myself I am concerned about a lack of emphasis on this crucial area in the NLS. Not only are we in danger of restricting children’s learning development through limiting opportunities to address oracy in the classroom but the emphasis on reading and writing may also be restricting learning. When we consider the National Numeracy Strategy (DfEE, 1999b) the ethos is upon the oral and concrete and away from any formal recording of calculations. Children are encouraged to make ‘informal jottings’ to record their work and the type of vertically set out sums that we are used to seeing are not introduced until the age of seven. Where then does that leave a Literacy Strategy that expects children of that age to write in a range of genres, correctly punctuated with good attempts made at polysyllabic words? Without doubt speaking and listening is neglected within the Framework for Teaching document but it was fundamental to my interpretation and implementation of literacy within the classroom. Could it be that my drive for inclusivity led me to look for ways to cover the objectives without reference to reading and writing?

Although Hart (1994, 1996) came to her thinking through her work with individual pupils who were working on a writing workshop format I felt that the theoretical framework she presented was equally valid in my study. We both had, as the same aims, a quest to see how legitimately our research could bring about a framework that could be applied in teaching. As an ‘outsider’ conducting research in the classroom Hart came to realize the difficulties in interpreting the data she had collect, in her case examples from a writing workshop. A class teacher has a greater knowledge of the children than the researcher and, as Hart points out, become experienced at interpreting the situation from the viewpoint of the child and tailoring their own teaching to the needs of the class from moment to moment.

As a researcher I felt that I too had to 'step back' and look at all possible explanations and interpretations of the data I collected.

I have supported the viewpoint of Hart that an argument for transference exists in the research model's closeness to the analytical class practitioner. But this requires staff willing to analyse the classroom situation and attempt to create change, accepting sometimes that there is a great likelihood that they will be the one that will have to change. Unfortunately this approach is problematic for those who have had the trauma of working in a school in 'Special Measures', all too often the teachers I worked with were afraid of failure. They had been told that they were poor teachers so often that on the whole they believed it.

Rather than planning lessons based upon their own ideas or something they were good at the teachers at Northtown School often fell back on textbooks and teacher manuals which then led to lessons that were delivered in a sterile, staid way. No resource money was available so teachers had bought for themselves literacy teaching manuals that appeared to provide lesson plans. The often inappropriately matched material coupled with lack of differentiation meant that children became restless, unable to achieve and sometimes disruptive. This fulfilled the teachers' expectations that they were unable to teach well and created a downward spiral of both pupil and teacher disaffection. Whereas I feel everyone concerned accepted that the school was in serious difficulties a crucial part of the recovery process appears to be missing. A critical part of pupil progress is the positive feedback they receive therefore surely a fundamental aspect of the support a school in special measures should be such feedback. Testing and inspecting something does not bring about change. What does bring this about is building upon what is good and giving people recognition for what they are trying to do.

My evaluation of the research and its consequences

In terms of participant research there is a tradition of action research designed to promote change. Although the action research cycle was the model I adopted there were some difficulties describing the separate cycles as they were not always apparent. If, as I have suggested, the research framework was an extension of evaluative teaching it follows that the type of analysis I was using was based upon a model of reaction to the events in the classroom. Thus in broad terms it could be said that my interventions changed on an almost daily basis as I changed my teaching according to the previous teaching and learning. It was however possible to place the interventions in broad cycles of action.

Whereas for those of us working within the classroom there is limited opportunity to bring about changes to national policies and practices there is the scope to promote change to our own practice, that in turn may affect policy and practice within the school. One must not forget the value of the work in terms of ones own life experiences, both as an educationalist and as personal self-development. I have certainly begun to look at the inclusive classroom with a renewed vigour and enthusiasm following the insights my study provided.

I feel that the research questions that arose from the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy are relevant to education practice and policy today even though the strategy appears to be no longer at the forefront of the nation as it was three years ago. What began as a piece of research into my support role as a Literacy Consultant became much more classroom orientated than I expected. I expected it to be rooted in the practice of teaching literacy but it developed into an analysis about including all youngsters.

The National Literacy Strategy gave my study a particular slant but there are analogies to all curriculum areas as I believe the fundamental skills that I attempted to address, those of speaking and listening, are necessary throughout school and indeed life. I will have the opportunity to present my work to officers within the LEA and hopefully it will, at the very least, promote dialogue about the inclusive literacy classroom. It will also suggest to others a possible model to bring about change within their own classrooms, or maybe just provide an impetus to look at their own practice. Alongside the research findings practicalities of conducting the study enabled me to support a school in special measures in an innovative way.

I have used triangulation of evidence throughout the study to justify the data's validity. However McFee (1993) reminds us how the technique of triangulation brings together a range of data in order to make statements about the relationships between the different evidence, it does not substantiate the validity of the data itself. There may then be some difficulties in transference to other situations. But then all classrooms are unique in their makeup and I would not suggest that another researcher would necessarily obtain the same results as I did.

The study itself was a 'snapshot' of the early days of the NLS, I see considerable value in long-term research into the area. Unfortunately the class teacher with whom I worked has since left the school but it would be interesting to investigate her literacy teaching practice at this later date. The class of children in the study are, by and large, still together and a longer-term study would have allowed a comparison to be made between them and another class of children. The model I implemented was towards a gradual introduction of the daily literacy hour, how do such classrooms now compare with those schools who implemented the hour fully from the beginning or who have not adopted the strategy? My study stopped with the introduction of the elements of shared work, further investigation could consider the independent and group work. What practices exist that allow for inclusivity for all in these areas?

There is further scope to investigate how the NLS can be a model for teaching inclusive literacy to classes containing many other groups of pupils. In particular the research could be extended to cover the needs of that broad band of pupils that the NLS (DfEE, 1998b p.113) considers to include *pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties*. Although work is being carried out at the moment in some special schools, including one within my LEA, on how to assess the literacy development of pupils working towards level 1 of the National Curriculum I suspect that this concerns only a minority of such pupils. For us within the Local Education Authority the vast majority of this band of pupils are educated within mainstream schools and how to meet their needs whilst meeting the needs of others in the class AND implement the NLS holds great potential for further research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Observation Schedule pp.3-7

- blank format

- completed form

Timed Observation Schedule pp.8-13

- blank format

- extracts from completed forms

Appendix 2 Extracts from field notes pp.14-15

Appendix 3 Extracts from record of Staff meeting pp.16-19

Appendix 4 Extracts from discussions pp.20-23

- Extracts from discussions with head teacher

- Extracts from discussions with class teacher

Appendix 5 School's Literacy Audit pp.24-26

Appendix 6 Planning pro-forma pp.27-31

- carousel model

- LEA model

Appendix 7 OFSTED evaluation of NLS pp.32-36

Appendix 1

Observation Schedule pp.3-4 -blank format
 pp.5-7 -from completed one

Timed Observation Schedule p.8 - blank format
 pp.9-13 - extracts from completed ones

v

PRIMARY CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

School: Teacher: Literacy Consultant:	Class/cohort: No. of pupils present: Date: Length of observation:
Focus of the observation:	
EVALUATION CRITERIA	COMMENTS
1. Teacher's planning and preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well-organised environment • effective range of displays • accessible and appropriate resources • clear objectives for the session 	
2. Teacher's delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high expectations of pupils • tasks matched to needs/abilities • match of teaching style to task requirements • good relationships with pupils • clear exposition/task setting • effective intervention/questions • good use of teacher time & other adult support • effective use of marking 	

EVALUATION CRITERIA	COMMENTS
3. Pupils attitudes to learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respond readily to task set • concentrate well/remain on task • enjoy their work • can collaborate with others • can organise/select own resources • show initiative and take responsibility • show respect and care for others and resources • ask and answer questions 	
4. Pupil progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tasks are completed in time given • evidence of outcomes to indicate progress made • can evaluate work/tasks done and suggest improvement 	
Suggestions for Improvement:	
Teacher's Comments:	

PRIMARY CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

School: Northtown Teacher: Liz + 1 SA Literacy Consultant: Maureen Watkinson	Class/cohort: Y4/5 No. of pupils present: 17 (but then 3 to class 7) Date: 4/11/98 Length of observation: 1 hour
Focus of the observation: Literacy hour - using Heinemann Literacy World unit 1 lesson 1. Teaching objectives for the week - identifying typical story themes & recalling & sequencing events, transform singular to plural, adjectives, opposites and apostrophe (shortened form). Lesson objectives T2 - story themes and W15 apostrophe. Objectives taken from year 3 term 2.	
EVALUATION CRITERIA	COMMENTS
5. Teacher's planning and preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well-organised environment • effective range of displays • accessible and appropriate resources • clear objectives for the session 	<p>Some weather words on display and children's own writing.</p> <p>Resources available for each group.</p> <p>Objectives taken from Heinemann. All sections planned although not on an appropriate pro-forma. Class and SA not told objectives of session.</p>
6. Teacher's delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high expectations of pupils • tasks matched to needs/abilities • match of teaching style to task requirements • good relationships with pupils • clear exposition/task setting 	<p>Objectives taken from Y3 - need to consider whether this is appropriate. Began by recapping previous work. T read to class rather than a shared text. Stopped after one page and pupils asked to predict endings. Good questioning used to draw out ideas from the children. (but only a few participating –how can you involve the whole class?)</p> <p>T finished reading the story and then some children were asked to recap. During this section it is important to keep up the pace - directing differentiated questions to children rather than asking for hands up may help. Decide whether you will accept answers called out or not – you told them not to but then praised the response from others.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective intervention/questions • good use of teacher time & other adult support • effective use of marking 	<p>Moved on to word level work from the Heinemann Big Book. During this section questions were directed more and differentiated to involve lower ability pupils.</p> <p>Not enough emphasis given to the teaching objective - the use of apostrophe to replace missing letters. I felt that more examples were needed - getting children to get more actively involved, writing, matching flashcards, etc. Only a few pupils responding to questions.</p> <p>Went through most of one worksheet before sending class off into groups. Work not related to teaching objective.</p> <p>No plenary session</p>
EVALUATION CRITERIA	COMMENTS
<p>7. Pupils attitudes to learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respond readily to task set • concentrate well/remain on task • enjoy their work • can collaborate with others • can organise/select own resources • show initiative and take responsibility • show respect and care for others and resources • ask and answer questions 	<p>Some children did not respond to questions in shared session. As a class they do not concentrate well. Although they knew what to do and had access to resources they did not settle and as a consequence the SA managed the class's behaviour whilst the guided session took place.</p> <p>Because of the range of abilities within the class it may be necessary to differentiate more the independent activities you set. This differentiation can be via task, outcome or even support. If the SA sits with one group at a time and does not reward interruptions by giving attention it may help to create more independence within the class.</p> <p>Guided reading book slightly too easy for the group but good links made to word level work and good comprehension brought out by questioning.</p> <p>During the reading the group read in turn. The emphasis was on expression. A guided session can also be used to teach reading strategies if it is at a challenging level.</p>
<p>8. Pupil progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tasks are completed in time given 	<p>Series of unrelated tasks did not encourage pupils to complete any one. Difficult to ascertain how much work some children did as they were 'working' on partially</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> evidence of outcomes to indicate progress made can evaluate work/tasks done and suggest improvement 	<p>completed tasks. Some good oral responses during the shared session demonstrating that pupils beginning to understand the make up of different story genre.</p> <p>Pride in their own work is not yet evident.</p>
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Suggestions for Improvement:

Lists of common words on display would help to support independent spelling.

An expectation is that in shared session, as the children are not yet fluent readers, the shared text needs to be read by all to practise their skills supported by you reading with them rather than to them.

The word level work was good but could be improved by making it more interactive.

What could the children do to participate in the lesson more?

Guided reading - book should be 90-95% accuracy level. Guided reading rather than reading in turns. Think about what you and the group will do before/during/after reading. (Still a place for group reading such as this but it could be an independent session used maybe to finish a story.)

Consider putting the SA with a group rather than encouraging pupils to expect attention during their independent work. You may need to cut down the length of time you expect them to remain on task to begin with but it should improve.

A short plenary section would help you to evaluate the pupils' learning.

Teacher's Comments:

Felt that each section had overrun and should have done more examples on the board. Has just started the guided sessions.

Timed Observation Schedule

Codes

Natalie – Ne

On task – OT

Shouting out – S

Nathan – Nn

Off task – OF

Talking to peers – TK

Gareth – G

Out of seat – OS

Talking to adult – TA

James – J

Left table area – LT

Listening to peers – LP

Left room – LR

Listening to adult – LA

		Teacher/SA
Ne		
Nn		
G		
J		
Ne		
Nn		
G		
J		
Ne		
Nn		
G		
J		
Ne		
Nn		
G		
J		
Ne		
Nn		

Extract From Timed Observation Schedule

Codes

On task – OT	Shouting out – S
Off task – OF	Talking to neighbours – TK
Out of seat – OS	Talking to adult – TA
Left table area – LT	Listening to peers – LP
Left room – LR	Listening to adult – LA

		Teacher/SA
9.30	Sitting on carpet. About half OF. S who are you? General TK Several playing with some paper clips, flicking them at each other, poking children in front. Only a few at front looking at book.	T discussing story. Sequence Q. SA LA
9.32	TK increasing – difficult to hear T. Activities above continue.	As above SA talking to group of pupils asking them to look at T, stop talking.
9.34	S – what did you say Miss. S – he’s just hit me S – get off S – Miss they’re messing about	T continues. SA attempts to quieten pupils.
9.36	Some getting up as their group given task. S can I do that? S I want to read. S He’s stood on me. One boy hitting neighbour on back. Lot of pushing going on.	T giving instructions for independent work – task for each table to complete.
9.38	Some moving to tables – brought back by SA physically holding arms. Little LA, TK	T completing instructions, break off to ask all to sit still.
9.40	Many turning around to talk to SA. S will you help us? S what do we do? S Can I go to the toilet? S I’m going to	T begins to hand worksheets out. Asks for quiet several times, stop

	the toilet. LR S. Do I go to class 7?	pushing.
9.42	Moving to table groups. Grabbing pencils, one pot knocked over. One girl refusing to sit, stood in corner – SA talking – G tries leave room -SA hold her arm ‘let’s get a jigsaw out.’ Pupil enters and 2 LR. (to c7?)	Moved to sit with group, asks 2 boys to sit down – moves away.
9.44	2 boys T asked to sit down arguing over places. One sits down other tries to push him out of his seat. Lot of S and swearing at each other. Standing boy begins to thump other on back. S from others. One boy gets picture out of drawer and begins to colour it.	T moves to dispute – asks standing boy to sit on next chair. Tells him to stop hitting. Pulls him away from table. Boy LF.
9.46	Girl doing jigsaw throws it on floor. Begins to cry. Other LS - to comfort her? S Miss xx crying. General noise level high. Lots of S & TN	Asks SA to follow boy. T sits with guided reading group.
9.48	Pupil enters S xx has to come to class 7. Child LR. Cannot see anyone OT. Guided group TN as T speaks to next table. Several LT to talk to others. Girl still crying.	
9.50	Many drawing and colouring on worksheets. Several LT to TN. Noise so high can’t hear what SA or T saying.	SA returns holding onto boy. T goes to crying girl. Gives her a hug. Helps her to pick up jigsaw.
9.52	Boy who returned with SA refusing to speak – standing, sulking. S is it	T still with girl. Talking quietly to her – can’t

	<p>assembly soon. S can I play when I've done this – waving worksheet in air. Guided group flicking bits of rubber around the table. Other OS wandering around room, two going to tray and getting out comic.</p>	<p>hear what. Asks those around her to settle down and get on.</p>
9.54	<p>Others come to look at football comic, S miss I don't know what to do. S (to SA) can you help me? Girl begins jigsaw again – friend goes to help. T – sit down and finish your work first then you can have some free choice.</p>	<p>T moves around tables asking pupils to sit down. Returns to guided group. Sends one for bin to put bits of rubber in. Gets up again and visits table groups.</p>
9.56	<p>Chairs pushed over, lots of noise, pushing as they line up. Girls says she's not going to assembly. T holds her as she struggles to LR.</p>	<p>T shouts – line up for assembly.</p>

Extract From Group's Timed Observation Schedule

Codes

Natalie – Ne	On task – OT	Shouting out – S
Nathan – Nn	Off task – OF	Talking to peers – TK
Gareth – G	Out of seat – OS	Talking to adult – TA
James – J	Left table area – LT	Listening to peers – LP
	Left room – LR	Listening to adult – LA

		Teacher/SA
Ne	OT, LA, S out comments about text – we've done this before. T-never mind we're going to do something different this time. Ne- how d'ya know Miss? T- stop shouting out Natalie.	T reading text, pointing with finger. SA LA
Nn	OF, OS picking with fingernail at edge of display, watching T every few seconds.	
G	OF, OS, sitting under table, various noises- almost seems to be carrying on a conversation with himself.	T asks Nn to return to carpet.
J	OF, undoing laces from his shoe. Very intent on task –no interaction with anyone, no attention to T	T asks G to move out.
Ne	OT, puts up hand to answer Q but S answers (appropriate answer) without being asked. T-don't shout out Natalie.	T asks what might happen on next page.
Nn	OF as above, brought back to carpet by SA	SA physically returns Nn
G	OF, OS, still refusing to come out from under table.	T asks G to move out.

J	OF, still playing with lace, undoing them threading again.	T returns to text, asks or quiet.
Ne	OF dispute with peers, pushing, TK, S get off, don't you touch me, thumped other, muttering under her breath. T - what's the matter Natalie? Ne-it's her she squashing me. T-well move over a bit then. Ne- There's no room(thumping again). T-either sit still or move.	T asks for quiet
Nn	OF, moving slowly back to display, pupil in way, Nn kicks him.	T asks Nn to sit still –no response.
G	OS, still partly under table, S inappropriate comments. Still making noises – clicks, squeaks.	T discussing speech marks in text, pointing out, questions
J	OF, does not appear to have paid any attention to T, still occupied with laces.	
Ne	S suggests that T tell Nn off, still some dispute with neighbours.	T- Ne be quiet, asks Nn to return to carpet. SA goes.
Nn	OF, when brought back by SA kicks out, told to stand in the corner by T. T- several requests – move now, I won't tell you again, stand over there.	T- stops discussing text, asks Nn to stand in corner. SA trying to get some quiet from rest of class.
G	OF, OS seems to be a 'world of his own' mouth moving as if having a conversation with himself, fidgeting – never entirely still.	T introduces group work – asks for quiet several times.
J	OF, not heard any sound from him, now using end of lace to move fluff from new carpet around and into piles.	T as above. SA giving some books out.

Appendix 2

Extracts from field notes

p.15

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Explained that this was our circle time and we would play some of the games we learned last week.

Asked two pupils to move some tables. [*Nathan went to help, pointed out that he had done this job last week, continued to help, asked him to get me a chair.*]

Asked all to bring chair into circle.

Nathan did this without fuss.

Play a change seat if ... game. Allowed pupils to suggest reasons.

Went round circle 'my favourite thing to do is ...'

'I feel happy when...'

'when I am happy I feel...'

Discussed feeling sad and one child said she didn't like the light off at night.

Asked how this might make her feel – someone suggested scared.

Went round circle 'I feel scared when...' all participating

Nathan – I'm not scared of nowt. [*getting a bit agitated, rocking on chair*]

Natalie – yes you are – I bet you are.

Nathan – I'm not, I can batter anyone.

Later someone said they were scared of their brother.

Nathan – Yeh, but I bet your brother dun't hit you like mine does.

He went on to say that his brother 'beat him up every night'

Natalie- I bet he's well scared Miss. [*hand up- waited to be asked*]

I asked her to give me a sentence to write

Natalie- he looked up and felt scared.

I wrote the sentence and asked if anyone could think of how he might have looked.

Pupil- He slowly looked up and went white he was so scared.

Natalie- that's stupid.

Appendix 3

Extracts from record of Staff meeting pp.17-19

Northtown School – Extracts from Staff Meeting

Staff. How much time will you be able to give us, what will you be doing?

Me. I've got 10 schools, plus a couple of Infant schools, but some of them will need less time than yourselves. I will be in schools at least once a week but some will only want me to a staff meeting or a parents meeting, I've also got to visit about 20 schools for that so we need to look at INSET days because I'm quite booked up for some days already. I'll be talking to H & L (head and literacy co-ordinator), looking at the audit they've done and then planning my work. Basically what I do is up to us all to plan together – whatever you want. I'm prepared to listen to you all. I don't know all the answers but I'll ask. Really at the beginning we need to sort out where we are with the NLS, what have you done so far?

S. Very little, we know nothing about it really.

Me. How much of the pack have you done? What did you do on your training day?

S. We didn't do any literacy work.

L. H said we needed to spend that day sorting out classes and rooms.

S. I spent all last weekend planning my lessons but I don't know if what we're doing is right.

Me. I want to come into everyone's lessons and I'll look at your planning but it's got to be manageable – what part of the hour have you started with? The shared reading?

S. I'm doing it all – I thought we had to – before she left X(*the previous head*) she bought lots of big books and sets of books and said we should be using them.

Me. We need to be up and running by the end of term but it depends where we are now.

S. But we're getting inspected again before then.

Me. Yes but we can't expect to have it all running when you haven't completed all the training yet.

S. But she (*the lead inspector*) will be looking at the literacy.

Me. It's about how you plan to implement it this term.

S. I'd rather make sure we do what we have to do.

Me. Have you got enough big books? I know you're short of some things – I can always get you some from the base.

S. We've quite a few, they're all sorted out for different years. But we haven't got anything to go with them.

Me. Sorry I don't know what you mean?

S. Well when we've used the big books it's then finding things for all the groups to do.

Me. Well what did you do last year – when it was called English- what work did you do then.

S. But that wasn't from the big books. Sorting out all that work for the different groups is taking me ages.

S. And my class don't go into groups, I've only got about 12 who can work together the rest need separate work so I'm planning for about 8 or 9 groups.

S. Mine really split into four groups, can I have just four groups?

Me. I think there's a number of things here. Five groups is best because then you can work with one each day. But let's not worry about that just now – I think we've got to get the shared stuff sorted first.

S. Yes but you don't know what it's like here, every week there's someone coming – they'll want to see it all in place, and we haven't got the worksheets and things. I'm having to spend all Sundays making worksheets for each group to use.

Me. But don't you think that some of your groups are similar and can do the same work?

S. But I've got to have them all differentiated for each group. And there isn't enough room on the planning sheet to write down all the things your doing.

Me. You don't have to use the planning sheet in the book – we made a more simple one I'll show you.

S. But how come you haven't written down all the group work on here.

Me. It shows what the guided group is doing and the rest of this class at xx school will be doing the same.

S. But I thought we had to have a carousel going, so each group was doing different work. You can't use the same stuff again because it doesn't fit in with that days reading.

Me. The draft said the only model was a carousel one but now it's just one way – it's up to you how you do it. Some Key Stage One teachers are used to working that way but none of my stage two teachers are doing it.

S. But we thought we had to – didn't we(*appealing to other staff*). We were told to do it like that.

Me. Are you planning all your independent work from the enlarged text?

S. Yes it takes for ever. I spent ages this week trying to find a big book for the 'oo' sound. Why can't it tell us which books to use?

Me. Most of your big books can probably be used for any of the objectives – sometimes you just have to teach some bit. You can't always link all the word level work to the text.

S. But we thought it all had to come from the text – that's what it says.

Me. Quite often you can. What I'm saying is that it doesn't always have to. It must be taking you ages to find a text?

S. Yes it is but that's what we thought we had to do.

Appendix 4

Extracts from discussions with head teacher pp.21-22

Extracts from discussions with class teacher p.23

Initial discussion with head teacher

Me- You've been here a bit now what are you're immediate thoughts about literacy and the levels of literacy in the school?

Carol- Fluent readers know how to handle books, get excited, interested, can read and tell you about it, predict. They can cope with the mechanics of reading, can skim, get information quick, understand, look for cues to understand, but can then actually find the information in the text and refer to it. They are confidence and happy to do it. Our children find it difficult to infer, the next move here is to move on from the basics.

Most of our children have a lack of language, not enough stimulation in their early years, haven't had time, not at the toddler stage of sitting on a knee talking about books. No interaction with fluent readers, being with them and talking to them. I went to a meeting this week about speaking and listening as the most important thing in literacy. A head who only does speaking and listening up to Y2, they have above average SATs results. They take them on trips, talked to, look at the environment. Even our adult literacy experiences [*referring to the recently begun attempts to get parents into school*] are too far above, too wordy for our parents. Need to think about starting a toy library, parents and toddlers playing within school and can then borrow anything they want. They need this experience but will maybe need help, how to talk to their children, play games with them. They see school as a threatening environment. The college is working with some parents, done half a term now and beginning to try to gradually wean them off the fun things they have done and into literacy and numeracy. We're about to appoint a home/school worker, jointly with three other schools in the area. Really important appointment but I don't know what calibre of person we will get for the money, what training. We want to organise literacy and numeracy courses for parents, look at a homework club. Will need to start with literacy and numeracy games and invite parents in. One parent on the college course is now going to night school for assertiveness.

Realised for himself that he needs to learn about others ways to put his points across, at the moment he's confrontational, shouting. EAZ money coming now, but what we need is something that's constant.

Not happy that we have to have the OILS Successmaker, children need the intervention of adults, not sitting in front of computers. I'm fighting not to have these banks of computers, they said we had to divide the staff room up to accommodate them but my staff need somewhere to relax. Say they will be used all the time including lunch-time. I'm not happy about that.

Extract from later discussion towards the end of the study

The support we've had? Most of is people support, mainly from the literacy team, you as consultant. It was good to have the seconded language co-ordinator with her training, but that's really back to the literacy team who trained her. We had some help from the English adviser in revising policy but it was mainly consultant. Supporting staff, individual support, working with pupils, planning, working with the language co-ordinator and with the support staff, giving support to the head and to me now. We've used the resource centre, extra books and teaching ideas. What made a real difference was quality support, best to have someone working alongside staff, real support. That's what numeracy should be giving. The unit has supported reading, through training support staff and making story sacks. We've had poets in and the theatre group. The rhyme assembly went well.

Effective support is more people, like the consultants. We need people still working with teachers. There should be more money on the consultancy side rather than books. The school would have managed without the extra money for books, what we need is extra time from the consultant, need another year of the same sort of support. With the EAZ the curriculum can change.

Reception has trialed the literacy hour but need to look more at speaking and listening. Next year reception will link more with the main school. We are looking at a theatre project. Something for the little ones, get the excitement part, then we can worry about covering the objectives.

Extract from discussions with class teacher

Liz- I really don't know what to do. I just can't seem to get them quiet, they won't do any work for me. I'm really fed up with it all, they're just horrible to me. I don't know what I suppose to do. I've spent hours planning a lesson and then they just won't listen.

Liz- Nathan was just so violent yesterday. He thinks he can just do what he wants. I'm going to send him to Carol if he does it again, I can't teach if he's forever hitting people. It's like everyday, someone says something and he goes for them. I don't know what I'd do if it wasn't for the SA taking him out sometimes.

Liz- I've never taught such poor readers before. In xx I was working with older children. I've read through all the literacy stuff, the phonics and that but I don't really know where to start. Shouldn't they have done all this? They don't seem to want to learn anything. I can't find enough reading books to send home and I can't find any records of what they've already read. Natalie keeps insisting that she read all the ones on the shelf and sulks when I ask her to choose one. She's being a real pain this week, every lesson I've got to ask her to stop shouting out. I sent her out twice yesterday.

Me- Did you notice if James and Gareth were making any attempt to join in [*the reading*]?

Liz- I watched them for most of the time, they seemed to be interested but weren't reading.

Me- I thought Natalie was responsive today.

Liz- She only called out once I think but she was muttering something, I don't know what but I think she got a few of her answers from Claire.

Appendix 5

School's Literacy Audit

pp.25-26

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School: Northtown

Audit: Issues arising in KS1 (Attainment, Strengths and Weaknesses)

- A: Below national average.
- S: Girls achieving higher than boys. Good results from Better Reading Partnership programme.
- W: Reading and writing very poor. Children lack independence and have few word attack skills. 'EYES' test reveals lack of knowledge and skill on entry to nursery.

Audit: Issues arising in KS2 (Attainment, Strengths and Weaknesses)

- A: Below national average.
- S: Girls achieving higher than boys. Good results from Better Reading Partnership programme.
- W: Reading very poor. Children lack independence and spelling is poor. Poetry, spelling and aspects of story writing are poor. Non-fiction reading and writing is poor, children have difficulty identifying, evaluating and comparing text types.

Audit: Staff Training Needs

Staff turnaround a big problems, this impacts upon training needs.

- Linked to pupil attainment: The promotion of high expectations is an area of weakness throughout the school.
- Linked to implementation: Training required on all aspect of the LH.
- Linked to action plan: INSET clearly identified. Linked closely with the implementation of the literacy hour and its monitoring and pupil assessment.

Action Plan: Timetable for Implementation

Gradual timetable of implementation due to training not undertaken at the beginning of term. DLM completed in small sections with full implementation not complete until February '99.

Action Plan: Parental/Governor involvement

A variety of activities planned to inform parents, newsletters, displays, reading workshops, story times etc. These need to continue throughout 1999. Literacy governor needs to be kept informed.

Action Plan: Curriculum Targets (Links with Audit)

As children's literacy skills are at a very low level no specific curriculum targets were identified on the audit.

Action Plan:

- Monitoring Procedures Identified:

Clearly identified - teachers' planning, classroom observations, portfolio of work etc. These monitoring procedures target aspects of literacy hour following staff development and the LHs implementation.

- **Evaluation Identified:**

Evaluation of implementation against teachers' planning.

Issues:

- Whilst there are a vast number of weaknesses in the children's literacy skills it would be useful to target specific aspects to monitor over a period of time. In this way the school could evaluate aspects of the LH and, hopefully, staff will be able to see progression over time if children's work within this area is sampled throughout the school.
- During the Autumn term 1998 parents were imaginatively informed about the NLS and its progress is to be reported to the governors. Both these aspects need to continue throughout 1999.
- Low expectations of children by some staff members needs to be addressed. A consistent approach and the opportunity for staff to see progression will aid this. Planning for LH should reflect our aim to base some aspects of text on the abilities of the more able and always provide challenge.

Literacy Consultant _____ Date

Discussed with _____ Date

Appendix 6

Planning pro-forma

pp.28 –carousel suggestion

pp.29-30 –LEA produced one

Weekly Plan

Name of School

28

Class: Year Group(s): Term: Week Beg.: Teacher:		Guided Group Tasks (reading or writing):	Guided Group Tasks (reading or writing):	Independent Group Tasks					Plenary
Whole class – shared reading and writing	Whole class – phonics, spelling, vocabulary and grammar								
Mon									
		T	T	OA	I	OA	I	OA	I
Tues									
		T	T	OA	I	OA	I	OA	I
Wed									
		T	T	OA	I	OA	I	OA	I
Thur									
		T	T	OA	I	OA	I	OA	I
Fri									
		T	T	OA	I	OA	I	OA	I

T = Teacher, OA = Other Adult, I = Independent

School Weekly Planning Sheet for Literacy Year Term Week

	Objectives		Shared		Independent Work	Plenary
	Text	Word/S	Text	Word/S	Activities	Assessment
Mon						
Tues						
Wed						
Thus						
Fri						

Guided Groups

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

Appendix 7

OFSTED

pp.32-33

The National Literacy Strategy

An evaluation of the first year of the National Literacy Strategy

Main Findings p. 6-7

Points for Action p.7

6 The NLS is being implemented in almost all classes in almost all English primary schools. By the end of the autumn term 1998, the four components of the Literacy Hour – shared text work undertaken by the whole class, sentence and word level work, independent and group work, and a plenary session – were in place in the vast majority of schools. Almost all special schools have adopted the Strategy and have made the necessary modifications to ensure that the activities are appropriate for their pupils.

7 It is too early to be confident about the extent of the impact of the Strategy on standards, particularly as the National Curriculum tests were taken just over two terms after the NLS was introduced in September 1998. Certainly, the improvement of five percentage points in the 1999 Key Stage 2 test results for English, in which 70 per cent of pupils achieved Level 4 or above, was very welcome and has gone a significant way towards the government's target of 80 per cent by 2002. There is no room for complacency, however. The performance of boys, of whom only 46 per cent achieved Level 4 in writing compared to 61 per cent of girls, is worryingly low, and there are wide variations in the performance of pupils in different local education authorities and in the rates of improvement between different LEAs.

The results of the specially commissioned English tests taken by pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 in the sample schools also provide early evidence of the progress made by pupils between the end of Key Stage 1 and the end of Year 3. The results of the Year 3 tests for reading are generally encouraging, showing, for example, over half of the pupils who achieved Level 2 in Key Stage 1 improving to Level 3 in their first year in Key Stage 2. The results of the writing tests, however, are worrying. Far fewer pupils progressed to higher levels, and about two in five of the pupils who achieved Level 3 in Key Stage 1 (about seven per cent of the total) achieved only Level 2 by the end of Year 3. This difference in progress between reading and writing is reflected in the evidence of inspection, which consistently showed that the teaching of writing was a weakness in too many of the schools in the sample.

The quality of the teaching of the Literacy Hour has improved throughout the year, although the teaching of text level work has remained better than the teaching of word level work, particularly phonics. The teaching of phonics is now receiving a much greater priority in most schools. It has improved in quality but there are still too many lessons, particularly in Years 3 and 4, where phonics is not taught well; it remains weak in almost one-quarter of lessons in the intensive category of schools.

- 10 Teachers are more confident in teaching reading, through the use of a shared text and guided reading, than they are in teaching writing. Insufficient emphasis is being given to the teaching of writing.
- 11 For many teachers the implementation of the NLS has meant a considerable change to their approach to the teaching of reading. There has been a considerable move away from the practice of "hearing readers" to one in which pupils are taught to read directly by the teacher.
- 12 Many teachers have found it hard to provide worthwhile tasks for all pupils during independent work, although pupils' ability to work independently has improved throughout the year. The best practice in the independent work sessions has been characterised by uncomplicated organisation and a small number of clearly-defined learning objectives.
- 13 The use of other adults to support the Literacy Hour usually has a positive effect. This is particularly true where training has been provided for these adults and careful consideration has been given to their deployment. Some adults, however, are too willing to "give the right answer", rather than help pupils develop strategies of their own.
- 14 The best teaching of literacy was in Years 5 and 6 and in reception classes. The weakest teaching was in Years 3 and 4, where in too many schools insufficient emphasis was placed on the teaching of word level work, even when test results from Year 2 indicated that phonics and spelling were weak.
- 15 Although many schools complained that the booster classes were introduced rather too quickly, they also reported that their impact had been positive and that they had helped those pupils in Year 6 who were close to achieving Level 4 in the National Curriculum English tests.
- 16 The contribution of the headteacher was one of the most significant factors in the progress made by schools with the implementation of the NLS. The leadership and management of the implementation of the Strategy were good in about half of the schools, but weak in almost one in five.
- 17 There has been an important shift in the role of effective headteachers through the year. They concentrated at first on the mechanics of implementing the Literacy Hour; now they are increasingly focusing on the monitoring of standards and the observation and evaluation of classroom practice.

- 18 Literacy co-ordinators have played a key role in the implementation of the Strategy, and their impact has been satisfactory or better in more than four out of five schools. An important element in the effectiveness of the co-ordinator was how much support and status they were given by the headteacher.
- 19 The teaching and subject knowledge of the co-ordinators were better than those of the other teachers. They taught considerably more good lessons and fewer poor lessons than other teachers.
- 20 The implementation of the Literacy Strategy has been supported effectively by the team of regional directors and the literacy consultants employed by the LEAs. Regional directors have managed the implementation with great skill and commitment, assessing strengths and weaknesses in their regions, and offering support, guidance and training where appropriate. The quality of the guidance and training provided by the literacy consultants, especially to those schools receiving intensive support, was satisfactory or better in nine out of ten schools and good in six out of ten.
- 21 The role and impact of LEA advisers and inspectors vary considerably. The autumn term task of setting literacy targets was not undertaken well in many LEAs. In addition, a few LEAs gave insufficient priority at first to the implementation of the Strategy or sought to promote other approaches to literacy that were not fully consistent with it. However, by the summer term most LEAs had begun to implement formal systems for monitoring the NLS and identifying training needs, although lines of communication between consultants and advisers and inspectors were not always clear.
 - i continued improvement in headteachers' understanding of the Strategy and in the development of headteachers' skills in analysing assessment data, in observing teachers teaching literacy and in providing feedback in a way that improves practice;
 - ii an extension of the support and training that has so far, been received largely by schools in the intensive category, to a higher proportion of all schools;
 - iii consideration by teachers of how pupils can apply and develop in other subjects, the skills they have learned in the Literacy Hour;
 - iv better communication, in some LEAs, between the literacy consultants and the advisory and inspection teams, to enable concerns about particular schools to be tackled, training needs identified, and sensible priorities for the use of the time of literacy consultants established;
 - v training for LEA advisers and inspectors, where necessary, in monitoring and evaluating NLS work in schools so that they have sufficient knowledge of the teaching of literacy to give informed feedback and advice;
 - vi liaison between the LEA teams responsible for the implementation of the National Numeracy and National Literacy Strategies.
- 23 All of the above points for action have already been recognised and, in the main, are being tackled in the enhanced programmes of support and training that are now being delivered. Those with responsibility for taking the Strategy forward have been quick to respond to aspects of its implementation that have required additional training and support. There is, for example, a new scheme for the teaching of phonics that is being implemented following training for all teachers of reception pupils, and the Additional Literacy Support (ALS) programme to improve the teaching of literacy in Years 3 and 4 is already in place.

POINTS FOR ACTION

- 22 For the momentum of the first year of implementation to be sustained, and for the necessary improvements to take place, the following will be required:
 - i more training for teachers in how to teach writing effectively, particularly the teaching of grammatical awareness and sentence construction;
 - ii more emphasis on the teaching of shared and guided writing;
 - iii further training in the teaching of phonics at Key Stage 1, and more systematic attention to phonics in Years 3 and 4;